

Appendix 2

VERBATIM RESPONSES

About These Verbatim Comments

Respondents were asked several open-ended questions during the course of the interview. In an open-ended question, the interviewee is asked to speak in his or her own words and offer a comment, suggestion or reason for some other response. The interviewer is trained to record the statement word-for-word, probing to clarify, wherever possible, the meaning of any term or phrase that is vague or too general. For example a response of "they do a good job" would be probed to clarify what specifically is meant by "good job."

This Appendix to the 2000 Customer Survey contains all of the open-ended responses as recorded by the Gilmore Research interviewers. There were four types of open-ended responses that were recorded:

- Reasons for low ratings on the 7-point scales. These were asked only of those who gave scores of 1, 2 or 3 and were given by only a small portion of the total respondent base.
- Several workgroups asked their customers what additional products and services could be provided.
- Responses to two wrap-up questions on what OFM can do better, and what OFM should not change. These questions were asked of all respondents. The answers were coded into broad categories that are referenced in the main body of the report.
- Voluntary comments of executive-level respondents that were offered in the course of answering questions Q7h and Q7i. Comments were not elicited and not everyone made a comment, but when they did, it was recorded.

These verbatim responses are organized by OFM workgroup customer so that the responses can be viewed by workgroup.

Table of Contents

Budget Division Questions

Q8AB1 The OFM Budget Division makes decisions in a timely manner. (If low rating) What would you like to see them do more of, or less of, to further improve?	5
Q11A1 Satisfaction with products & services from the Budget Division. (If low) What would you like to see them do more of, or less of, to further improve?.....	6
Q11A3 What, specifically has the Budget Division staff done over the past year that has made you more satisfied?	7

Budget Division Questions and Executive Level Questions

Q7K6 What improvements would you like to see (in the appeals process for budget decisions)?.....	13
--	----

Statewide Accounting Consultants Group Questions

Q8BA1 The Accounting Consultants Group makes decisions in a timely manner. (If low rating) What would you like to see them do more of, or less of, to further improve?.....	19
Q8BB1 I can be involved in decisions of Accounting Consultants Group that affect my job. (If low) What would you like to see them do more of, or less of, to further improve?.....	19
Q8BI What additional products or services could the Statewide Accounting Consultants Group provide that would be useful to you?	20
Q11B1 Satisfaction with consulting and technical support for Accounting. (If low) What would you like to see them do more of, or less of, to further improve?.....	24
Q11C1 Satisfaction with Accounting Consultants policies & procedures. (If low rating) What would you like to see them do more of, less of, to further improve?	24
Q11C3 What, specifically has the Accounting Consultants staff done over the past year that has made you more satisfied?	25

Personal Services Contracting Group Questions

Q8EA1 Personal Services Contracting Group makes decisions in a timely manner. (If low rating) What would you like to see them do more of, or less of, to further improve?.....	28
Q8EH What additional products or services could the Personal Services Contracting Group provide that would be useful to you?	28
Q11D1 Satisfaction with products & services from the Personal Services Contracting Group. (If low) What would you like to see them do more of, or less of, to further improve?.....	30
Q11D3 What, specifically has the Personal Services Contracting staff done over the past year that has made you more satisfied?.....	31

Population and Forecasting Group Questions

Q8DG What additional products or information could the Population and Forecasting Group provide that would be useful to you?	33
--	----

Q11E1 Satisfaction with Population & Forecasting products & services. (If low) What would you like to see them do more of, or less of, to further improve?.....	35
Q11E3 What, specifically has the Population and Forecasting staff done over the past year that has made you more satisfied?	35

Statewide Financial Systems Group Questions

Q11G1 Satisfaction with the way Financial Systems Group meets agency's business needs. (If low) What would you like to see them do more of, less of, to further improve?.....	36
Q11H1 Satisfaction with way Financial Systems Group supports receipts and management of accounts receivable. (If low) What would you like to see them do more of, or less of, to further improve?.....	36
Q11I1 Satisfaction with preparation & submittal of budget requests & allotments. (If low) What would you like to see them do more of, or less of, to further improve?.....	36
Q11J1 Satisfaction with time collection, labor distribution & cost allocation. (If low) What would you like to see them do more of, or less of, to further improve?	38
Q11K1 Satisfaction with information that supports financial management (If low) What would you like to see them do more of, or less of, to further improve?.....	38
Q11K3 What specifically has the Financial Systems staff done over the past year that has made you more satisfied?	39

Other Executive Level Questions

Q7H How would you rate OFM overall for helping you understand the fit between your agency's priorities and the Governor's priorities? (Comments volunteered)	45
Q7I Please rate the OFM commitment to helping your agency succeed (Comments volunteered).....	45
Q7K How well does OFM communicate and coordinate operations within its own agency? (Comments volunteered).....	45
Q7K1 Please rate the extent to which you feel OFM has improved the communication and coordination within OFM within the past 12 months. (Comments volunteered).....	46
Q7K2 What would you like to see OFM do more of or less of to further improve (communication and coordination within OFM)?.....	46

General OFM Questions

Q22 What one or two things, if any, has OFM done over the past two years that have been of help to you or your organization?.....49

Q23 If OFM could make ONE change that would make their products and services better, what would it be?.....73

Budget Division Questions

Q8AB1 The OFM Budget Division makes decisions in a timely manner. (If low rating) What would you like to see them do more of, or less of, to further improve?

Other

Don't make decisions in a hurry at the last minute; start making them earlier. The budget instructions came out two or three weeks late, parts of it, and we still don't have capital budget instructions!

Fiscal note instructions could be produced much earlier.

Listen to appeals.

More in touch with agencies

Coordinate restrictive legislation. It is causing all the sectors to not coordinate well. The appropriation process has become very cumbersome.

Be more in touch with the agencies for which they have responsibility.

I'd like to see OFM take a more active role in trying to weed out what our real needs are. Make legislative intent on funding much more clear.

Allow agencies more time to provide information

More lead-time is needed for the agencies to get responses back to them, especially during legislative sessions.

By the time you get information from them, the budget is two or three days away and you don't have time to handle the problem. When I have unanticipated receipts they don't look at them until the last minute so you don't have time to fix it. One way to improve this would be once they decide on a procedure, allow enough time to implement it. They should try and get the schedules out quicker than they do. Another problem is the analyst doesn't seem to know how the system works. They look at a different report than what we use to enter information to them. This was for the allotment system.

Don't know/Not sure

My opinion is based on hearsay.

Budget Division Questions

Q11A1 Satisfaction with products & services from the Budget Division. (If low) What would you like to see them do more of, or less of, to further improve?

Issues related to reports/information

Timeliness of fiscal instructions.

Honesty, fairness, openness.

More timely products. Products that are tested and well thought out before they release them.

Issues related to personnel or level of training/knowledge

Training, training, training. Clear training. When I ask them how much money is in that index account, they can't give me a straight answer and that's frustrating. I'll admit a lot of that was with one individual who has since been removed, but still when I ask them how much money is in the budget, after 15 or 20 minutes, it could not be explained. Never could in 4 years.

Issues related to the process/systems used

Have simpler financial systems.

Better planning, less last minute crises. For example, 695, we saw that we had a problem but not until 6 months later did we know our budget. We're always between the Governor's wishes and a crisis. It's always last minute stuff. It is improving. Over the last 5 years since ex- Governor (name) was in, we only got 5-10% of our budget, but just say it's much better than 5 years ago. That's the only way I can think of how to put it without going into a lot of details.

More/better communication

Listen. We have an unusual financial structure and that creates an inconsistency for them. It creates a variance. They don't know how to handle that because they try to force us into a mold or say there's only one answer but there's not. This happens every two years. We go around and around with them on things that don't fit into their mold.

They need to communicate more. When they leave a phone message, they need to give a little more detail of what they are doing, not just "in" or "out", like maybe how long they will be in or when they will be back. More classes, maybe on how the processes work, how the supplementals work, how the budget works, etc.

More responsiveness

Be more responsive to inquiries.

More help

I'd like them to be helpful and not so adversarial. It is like dealing with my dad. They are heavy-handed, dictatorial, and dogmatic. I feel like they will punish me. I don't feel like a customer at all.

Budget Division Questions

Q11A3 What, specifically has the Budget Division staff done over the past year that has made you more satisfied?

Internet system/information/tools improvement

Posted the budget on-line. As soon as the budget bills are released on the Internet we can access them.

Their Web site. More availability of data and formats that are more easily usable.

The BASS system and the information that is available on-line.

They have been working to develop Internet-based budget tools. That is the big deal.

FASTRACK technology. The access through computer systems to more budget information has helped.

New computerized capital budget systems.

Improved the capital budget system over the Internet. They did it that way.

Communication improvements/clearer/more frequent

Improved communications. The information is getting out in a more timely manner, they have changed the format, and they are more readily available for questions.

Better communication. Written notices of things stating why things have happened. They have given us updates of where we are in the process. They've paid more attention. I think they're trying to be more service-oriented. They've tried to make their instructions more easily understandable.

Communication is better. The new system for fiscal note process is much better. The fact that they have initiated electronic means to get back to the agency is more timely.

Communication. Attitude and personalities are more friendly.

More direct communication.

Electronic communication.

Better communication and the quality of the communication has increased too.

Communication. Basically getting information to related agencies about budget related issues.

Better communication. Better partially due to a learning curve on my part and better day-to-day communications.

They've improved their communication overall.

The budget analysts are more knowledgeable, open to communications, and more accessible than

Budget Division Questions

in the past.

They've worked hard on relationships and clear communication. The spirit of information and the sharing of information have improved plus the change in staff has helped to energize that process.

Q11A3 (cont.): What, specifically has the Budget Division staff done over the past year that has made you more satisfied?

They have more communication and maybe more accessibility or both.

The level of communication or the frequency of communication has dramatically improved compared to in the past. E-mail and the Web site have been very beneficial.

Communications improved, e-mail updates that we get on the budget during the legislative session, also e-mails are sent on upcoming deadlines.

Improved personnel/personnel change/attitude change

They are more responsive, more customer-oriented. (moved from "consolidating reporting system")

They have been able to adapt to the new administration.

They are customer friendly and more customer-oriented.

The current personnel is much more responsive and helpful in providing advice, which is very important.

They've replaced the old budget analyst with a very good budget analyst. It all comes down to the person that is doing the job.

Working in Budget, OFM asked for far more things than we request from them. A year ago they were very demanding of products and information that did not seem very relevant to the questions they were asking. With the personnel changes, this has changed. Also, with the staff changes, the timelines to respond to requests are more reasonable.

We got a new budget analyst. It was thanks to the retirement system.

Change of budget analyst and staff.

New staff people have better understanding of our programs.

We have a new staff person - a new budget analyst who has a wonderful attitude, is supportive and understanding. The individual is very strong in their technical competency - also listens well.

They have different personnel. In the Budget Division they have a number of new people there who are more helpful.

Budget Division Questions

They just continue to be really good to work with. They are improving their fiscal note process. They continue to have great analysts.

System improvements and their attitude and support.

The change in staff. We have a new budget person. The position was vacant before then, so that has improved. We now have someone.

They have hired more competent people. They are more accurate in the information they provide and they are more trustworthy.

Q11A3 (cont.): What, specifically has the Budget Division staff done over the past year that has made you more satisfied?

New staff is much more responsive and they appear to be a little more collaborative in their approach to the agencies.

They've turned over. The ones I used to work with are now gone, and the new Senior Budget Assistant and other staff for (unit name) are much more helpful.

Information sharing/more timely

The information has been more timely. I think there is improvement. It is improving on customer service.

They have been more communicative. They have shared more information in a more timely manner.

They shared information. Can you bullet that and underline it? It's the buzz around the hill, you know, the budget analysts have been able to communicate what they hear from their leaders to the agencies they represent. So we have been more able to know what direction and expectation they have.

They have been getting the information to us much quicker.

They have been more responsive to getting information to us.

Clearer/better budget instruction

The Assistant Director for budget sends e-mails on budget status. The detail on budget has been better than before.

Clearer instructions and fewer two-day suspenses but there's still too many suspenses. Can't think of how to clear that statement up so just leave it at that. They'll never get it anyway.

I think that they are making an effort that they weren't making before. They are trying to rewrite the budget to make it clearer.

Budget Division Questions

More accessibility/outreach to agencies

They've hired staff from our agency that know and understand our business. They made it easier to communicate and easier to know who to contact and receive or give information.

We have had more dialogue. The OFM Director was on my campus. The new Director of OFM has spoken to the Community College Presidents. This is a change.

They have changed to where they listen to the customer rather than have a predisposition to their answer. Their systems have improved in terms of budget preparation. In addition, their decision-making seems to be looking at a broader spectrum than strict dollars.

They have made some presentations at our quarterly business meetings that have been excellent. The Budget staff appears open to legitimate concerns.

Q11A3 (cont.): What, specifically has the Budget Division staff done over the past year that has made you more satisfied?

One is they have taken the time to become more familiar with the agency's business or the kinds of financial information we need and with our strategic objectives. They've adopted a more realistic expectation of what agencies need to provide in the allotment process that has reduced the amount of work we have to do but still gives the information they need to make an allotment decision.

They have become far more customer-oriented, far more willing to listen. Overall, it is just a much more productive and cooperative relationship - far less adversarial than we had a year ago.

They are easier to access. They are easier to get a hold of and talk to.

They have shown an interest in our agency.

Clearly, they have responded to requests for assistance at whatever level of assistance we have needed. They have answered over the phone and if we needed them physically here, they have come. They also did so in a timely manner to meet our needs. I did not feel that I had this before.

FASTRACK. It is more easily accessible and more manager friendly. It makes sense to someone who is not an accountant.

More outreach to the agency contacts.

Now, I can call them and get a special report - we could not do this in the past. It is very important to me in my job. Overall, I am very pleased with them and they have been improving over the years. I am very pleased with the staff they have. We have a good relationship. If I have questions, they answer and try to work it out.

Consolidating reporting system

(moved to category "improved personnel/personnel change/attitude change")

Budget Division Questions

Providing consolidating reporting systems so you don't have to go and re-enter data in several different areas.

Opened expanded systems, especially the BASS and FASTRACK.

Budget development system

Advent of systems to track budget, FASTRACK system.

The development of the Budget Development System. Their orientation in what is going on in budget and legislative and fiscal matters.

Understand our agency more, seen an effort to put forth good budget systems - I know they are working on it.

FASTRACK. On-line budgeting, up-to-date information.

Budget Division Questions

Q11A3 (cont.): What, specifically has the Budget Division staff done over the past year that has made you more satisfied?

Better explanation

The budget instructions are very well thought out.

Better training

The workshops I have attended have been at a more comprehensive level.

We have had some training as well as working with FASTRACK.

Budget Division and Executive Level Questions

Q7K6 What improvements would you like to see (in the appeals process for budget decisions)?

Other (specify)

Value to the communities associated. That is what is key.

Budget analysts are needed to work with agencies prior to submittal in order to work toward the government goals and the goals of the agency.

There seems to be an assumption that the budget requests aren't taken seriously. They need to do a better job allocating the small numbers to the agencies providing revolving fund services. One example I can give you is that they approved a 3% raise and then only provided a 2% raise.

Decisions based on data.

No need for improvement

Last three budget masters have been very helpful, so there has been a continuous improvement in taking seriously our efforts to improve our services. It used to be that if they disagreed, we had hurdles to jump. But now there has been a lot of improvement in this area.

There is no need for improvement.

Do not expect immediate reply/response from appealer

We are a board that meets every month and the basic process is I get a call that says, "this is the decision, what do you think about this?" OFM needs to recognize that we should have an opportunity at the next meeting to decide what the response will be rather than expecting an instant answer.

Additional time for appeals process

More pro-active review process, there is not much of an appeal process right now.

In the appeals process, more time additional time is needed for appeal.

The improvements center on more time to work around changes. As soon as the decision is made, they should provide more time to allow you to change things. I am bothered by the actions of staff that don't seem consistent with the Governor; don't seem to be aggressive, bold, creative, or use authority. But, OFM asks for more detail, what if questions, and does not seem too bold, or to act quickly. The leadership now has been a great and welcome change and has had a positive impact. I think the strategic direction from the Governor's office is stronger than ever before.

Give more time to agency to present their case. A small agency should have the same time allotted, just the same as large agency. They tend to put their efforts on the bigger agency.

At times, when we have the opportunity, to explain our needs on a more detailed level.

Budget Division and Executive Level Questions

Quicker turnaround on decisions.

Give us a little bit more time to respond. I mean the budget is out, and they need a response like in an hour. A lot of times you don't get that information till 2 hrs later, and you're out of luck.

Q7K6 (cont.) What improvements would you like to see (in the appeals process for budget decisions)?

We are told "no" immediately and then put on the defensive. I would rather have a more receptive answer and given a chance to explain.

The timing - they make no decisions for a long, long time and then they make them in a hurry.

More access, cooperation in decisions/less secrecy

Budget people spend time in the agencies for which they are attempting to speak and see the results of the services they expect to be delivered. Their role is primarily control, not assistance. I think this is probably in their charter - control.

Listen to input from agencies.

More training for staff in procedures and policies.

Nothing radical. In our agency since we are so small I think we don't get the attention we need. So just pay more attention to what they think are "minor agencies".

Expedite it a little bit as far as the decision-making.

Earlier feedback and more accurate feedback. Feedback / dialogue - I seem to sense a greater secrecy. More and more secrets. There is now new and unqualified staff.

Much more knowledgeable about what the agencies do. They seem to make decisions without knowing the agencies.

Like to see more discussion with OFM starting with the analyst then moving up to SBA in management. I believe people are looking at numbers more than the reality behind the numbers. OFM has lost track of what agencies do.

More familiarity with the agency's programs. You really can't support our programs without the knowledge. Speaking of the analysts in OFM, the partnership issue - we should work together as partners. OFM should help us succeed in working with us especially in legislative requests. It all rests on partnership - the feeling is that some analysts exercise their power and this does not make for a good relationship.

Instructions, brevity, clarity, and specifics. They rejected my proposal eight times. Eight times! And I am usually a quick learner. I'm like, help me! Eight times, that is just ridiculous.

Has improved with (name). Open encouragement of dialoguing with agencies - one on one. I appreciate the workload but in terms of risk -there are a lot of things lost. But we need to talk

Budget Division and Executive Level Questions

with OFM on topics like risk with real impacts on the public. This needs to be at a leadership director and department director level. Analysts have contacts but this needs to be at a higher level and should become routine.

We need to make sure our concerns are heard because we're such a small division. In a larger agency, our concerns kind of get lost

More access to OFM leadership in final decision-making.

Q7K6 (cont.) What improvements would you like to see (in the appeals process for budget decisions)?

More communication and cooperative decisions.

Like them to be more pro agency. That is, support the agency's needs instead of just telling us what to do.

More/better personal communication

More frequent 2-way communications. Most communications go up and not enough come down.

I would say the feedback; the reasons why a decision was rejected; what are some of the underlying reasons why. The last few years automation has been a higher need for many agencies, but in some cases, requests have been denied without explanation even though efficiencies had been identified that would result from the approval of the requests.

I guess a more open approach in being able to listen to another point of view and not just dictating from old tapes. That is, to be able to look at another point of view, and to really look at it with an open mind.

More personal concern for agency.

Maybe clearer communications.

Hard to say because the budget director is the one who deals directly with them. I suppose just increased communication from them. Sometimes they seem pretty arbitrary.

I would like to see them come to Eastern Washington more to see our side. We work with people who have never been to Eastern Washington to help us and they don't know who we are.

Better communication when there are changes made especially when OFM is making changes.

They listen - so that is a good improvement.

Would like to see more formalizing of the process so that the agency would have the ability to meet face-to-face with the director or deputy director vs. doing it all in writing or on the phone.

Communication. Throughout the process there is not always a continual flow of information. It seems to be always at the very end with no turn-around time.

Budget Division and Executive Level Questions

More communication of and follow through in the later stages of the budget processes. There were several items we work on that were dropped in the Governor's project and they were dropped without telling us why.

Additional contact with state agencies, better communication. Sending out information is fine but personal communication is better.

I would like to see their budget analyst better understand our program. They need to come out in the summer time and see us. I don't think they get out of their office enough. They need to get to know us in between Legislative sessions.

Q7K6 (cont.) What improvements would you like to see (in the appeals process for budget decisions)?

Like to see a better understanding of program issues. They tend to take a corporate view and put every one in the same mold but it just doesn't fit.

Quicker communication would be the main thing when we send information over to them. It would be nice if they got back to us.

More timely information/feedback

Faster time or quicker response.

Less political wrangling

I'd like to see a little bit more of a coordinated effort between the agency and OFM for a better shot at reality versus political budgeting.

I don't know if they listen to the problems in the agency. They pretty much have a number in their mind and end up with their number or maybe they're looking for a clinical number. They're more looking for a political solution rather than what works for the customers.

It ends up being political because it goes to the House of Representatives. We're not going to submit a request for more funding because by the time it goes to the Senate the integrity of the information is lost through the political process. We can never really know what the outcome will be. So, eliminate supplemental budget requests.

Better cooperation within the legislature between the Republicans and the Democrats.

Tough part is, number one, having a Governor's agenda prior to our budget submittal. Generally it is built after the Governor has seen our request or all of the requests. Then the negotiations work will be smooth if it is close to what he is thinking. If it's not, it won't make it through the process regardless if you appeal it or not.

Make the process automated, electronic

It would be nice if it were more automated, electronic. More electronic so we can work with it directly and we don't have to re-enter the information.

Budget Division and Executive Level Questions

Simplify the process, the jargon

Make it as simplified as possible so our residents can understand it.

Anything that would simplify their processes. For example, some of the language and jargon. Definitely articulating simple steps that don't get caught in the wherefores. There may be 3 main steps and then deal with the other 80 steps.

Small, systematic and less complicated - the appeal process is sometimes a waste of time because the appeal was not for the sake of doing it, but to hear the rationale. The appeals process is just for window dressing.

Actually I'd like to see the process streamlined a bit more. Just have it run a little quicker.

Q7K6 (cont.) What improvements would you like to see (in the appeals process for budget decisions)?

More/better explanation/information

Clear guidelines from OFM on the Governor's priorities and how our supplemental items did not fit in that.

The process. It's hard to determine at times their policy decisions; they're not consistent. A lot of that may be political decisions; it's hard to tell on this. Communication. Understand how they arrive at some of their actions at times it doesn't seem logical.

An explanation of what the process is.

Subjective opinions: OFM runs their agenda with very little concerns for operational agency problems. They take the tabloids from on high and our opinions don't matter very much. It's based on the Governor's agenda. It matters little what we say.

Multi layered review.

Quicker response, more closer relationships, and hands-on assistance. Sometimes the relationship is like a distant relative you don't even know. The budget leads for different programs should be given clear direction so that they are not there for adversarial relationships but to be clear and help agencies put their budgets in place, especially with FTEs.

Probably obtaining information quicker. Maybe more exchange of information and earlier opportunity for input

Maybe a little more formality is ingrained in their procedures so that it's clearly a step within the process. To clarify, it takes five ingredients to make a cake, and one of the five is sitting down with the agency and explaining exactly what was cut and why, and the agency can explain the implications, and be heard, and OFM can take that and make a final decision.

A way of more explanations for reasons for supplemental.

Budget Division and Executive Level Questions

Better predictions, better information regarding what is in store for funding agencies, and better handle on what to expect from the state.

Notify customers before taking action

I guess I'd like them to actually tell us what they're going to do instead of doing it without even talking to us. This past year they just implemented it without even telling us what they were doing, not even to our OFM analyst. They even left her out of the loop. It would be nice if the OFM numbers match the legislature's numbers. They're designing a new budget system that looks like it will be more to help OFM than to help the agencies. We will end up doing their work for them.

Learn sooner what recommendations OFM is making.

Don't know/not sure

Need more time to think about proposal for improvement.

Accounting Consultants Group Customers

Q8BA1 The Accounting Consultants Group makes decisions in a timely manner. (If low rating) What would you like to see them do more of, or less of, to further improve?

More timely assistance when it is requested.

They have so many channels to go through – fewer layers would be helpful.

Speed up response time.

Q8BB1 I can be involved in decisions of Accounting Consultants Group that affect my job. (If low) What would you like to see them do more of, or less of, to further improve?

Other

Better schedule coordination needs to fit the workload of the customer as opposed to their own.

I think the biggest thing is their classes are cancelled because of low enrollment so it's hard for us to schedule things when we don't have specific dates.

Better communications between all of the colleges. With a specific department sometimes information that comes down does not get to the right department.

Just a better customer service-oriented attitude. They think they are demagogues, and rather than getting help or support, they act like it is a black and white world. They could say well maybe you can't do it that way but if you use this approach we can help you.

Allow more input from the agency

More interactions. Wish they would ask us more what our opinions are to make decisions. They don't get our opinions.

If they are going to make a committee decision, they should stick to that committee decision. They should not make unilateral decisions. If OFM declares they are going to share the decision process, then they should, in fact, share it.

Giving agencies a little bit more freedom. Sometimes their interpretation is concrete, without taking your interpretation into consideration.

Consider agency input when customizing training. More availability for agencies to consultants. Clone (name).

More specific procedure

I would like them to expand on their SAAM manual by being specific on procedures to be used by our administration.

Accounting Consultants Group Customers

Q8BB1 (cont.): I can be involved in decisions of Accounting Consultants Group that affect my job. (If low) What would you like to see them do more of, or less of, to further improve?

They need to be more proactive in gaining consistency between agencies. In terms of consistency, agencies are told different answers and they do not provide the same answer - they are driven by whoever is asking the questions.

I think being a little more clear on questions. Sometimes we have issues that are not black and white, but we need more clarity. Consistency between people; sometimes we get two different answers from two people.

I'd like to see them give more training tailored to our individual agency needs. We are an agency who does not use them directly - we use them through another software system. We use some of their features directly but we feed into them through another system a lot and we have our own unique set of problems that go along with that.

A lot more customer input, data testing, a wider test group, and a longer period of testing and review.

More training

They could do more to be receptive to my ideas. There could be more training. It is once a year now, and we need twice a year training so we are not so bogged down with all the changes.

Q8BI What additional products or services could the Statewide Accounting Consultants Group provide that would be useful to you?

Other

One system that does everything - the variety of systems which exist like retirement, payroll, insurance, - you fix it one place but it is not fixed elsewhere.

More hands-on workshops. Any new programs or procedures that they are developing.

Modernize all their systems: AFRS, CAMs, Accounts Receivable.

Clearer interpretations of their regulations - I get responses like what does IRTT (sic) say? Well I just read it and I need an interpretation.

More/better staffing

We could get quicker responses to our questions. Just quicker responses so that we can accommodate our employees. Maybe they need more staff for quicker answers. The two people are excellent that I work with. It is just that they are overworked so the answers are delayed.

More staffing.

More time. They don't have enough people to cover all the agencies to understand them. They

Accounting Consultants Group Customers

need to spend time with each agency and they're understaffed.

Q8BI (cont.) What additional products or services could the Statewide Accounting Consultants Group provide that would be useful to you?

Improve accounting system/access/support/accessible

More communication and input in the formulation of accounting policies.

More detailed information on-line. For example, expenditures and revenue, and for a longer duration. Now you can only go back a biennium.

Modernized accounting systems: AFRS.

More/better training

Training classes - more than what they have or better than what they have. Or training that is specific to certain agencies.

Ensure that all accounting consultants staff are trained with accounting knowledge.

Spend more time with us, but they are short staffed.

Maybe a little bit more training on specific issues, e.g., the new GASB rulings that are brand new, and there was some other training that was on some of the OMB circulars, where we needed in more depth and it was going to be very broad.

More training. In the accounting and reports so there is a better understanding of what they have and what we need.

Better Web training/ make Web site more user-friendly

I think they should offer training over the Web system instead of having training in various locations. The training is wonderful but I can't afford to go.

They do a good job. Produce an interactive training lesson on the Web site on certain topics, any topic.

They need to expand the systems more to have additional options. Some systems are geared to general needs of agencies. Need to be able to extract data.

Internet dataware

It would be a data warehouse on the Internet. And here's the key - they're providing it on the Intranet, which is not accessible. That would be about it.

We need more Internet services to interface with them. The more we've gone to the Internet, the more up- to-date information we obtain and the faster it is.

Accounting Consultants Group Customers

Q8BI (cont.): What additional products or services could the Statewide Accounting Consultants Group provide that would be useful to you?

More specific Internet indexing

If there was a way to be a little more specific on some of the things we have to look up on the Internet in their accounting index. For example, I was looking up royalties and couldn't find them anywhere.

Less political wrangling

Once in awhile a decision will not be made timely due to the politics, such as implementing fringe benefit rule in accords with IRS. I want to see the right things done all the time and politics kept out of it. Politics being the pressure influencing decisions, either internally or externally, that results in exceptions to normal rules and regulations.

IRS definitions

More definitive answers on IRS issues.

More help/interaction

In the same manual, I'd like them to go into particular areas of Policies and Procedures and give specific departments and phone numbers that people could call for requests for information. Possibly they could have staff members who could be tied to certain policies so they are knowledgeable and so we can get a live person.

More active participation with the agencies they support. Rather than waiting until a crisis or problem occurs, they can be a little more proactive: "How're things going? What can I do to help you?" More proactive than reactive.

Other miscellaneous

We talked about some help in providing everyone with the same computer and software so everything's consistent and runs more easily because we'll all be on the same level. So purchasing us computer and software.

I'm pretty happy with the statewide accounting manual and it's saved me a lot of time.

Automated forms. They have improved so many things.

Recently we had to start taxing meals for employees who travel and do not involve an overnight stay. They could assist in automating a system to allow this; that would be helpful. Also they just made a spreadsheet that has to do with reconciliation and I'm wondering if the same process can be made or applied to L & I payments for medical aid?

Jazz up the training - it is boring - people fall asleep. I work more with the AFRS group, and I don't know who works with what group. We don't know how OFM is organized. I am pretty well satisfied with the data processing and the accounting groups and their services - accountants and

Accounting Consultants Group Customers

programmers, and persons who understand the law, but we don't know who their supervisors are. We know who to go to for answers.

Q8BI (cont.): What additional products or services could the Statewide Accounting Consultants Group provide that would be useful to you?

They could play a larger role in analyzing data for trends, mistakes, missing entries. They could do quite a bit more on non-appropriated funds. There are significant actions here. They tend to focus on the budgeted funds.

A brand new allotment program that gives you real time review of information going into the allotment system. A twenty-four hour turnaround is not reasonable.

Adding a particular module that would involve payroll but this requires an ok from personnel. Other than this, they have everything I need. This request is a little outside of their control. I prefer the paper. The contact I have is (name) and she is good and they should keep her.

They have all we need/have done everything they can

They have provided and responded to whatever I have asked them. They responded to my needs.

What they provide is good, can't think of anything now that they could provide that they don't already do. At year-end closing we could use a little more help as in an additional person. Especially when they have turnovers and they are not familiar with closings.

Nothing in particular

None.

None. They do everything I expect and more.

None that I'm aware of.

I think they do quite well. I haven't been in it long enough to notice that they are missing anything.

Nothing, really.

Accounting Consultants Group Customers

Q11B1 Satisfaction with consulting and technical support for Accounting. (If low) What would you like to see them do more of, or less of, to further improve?

Other

I would like them to develop policies and procedures manuals specific to state agencies like higher education and those types of environment so that we can have references to information that is appropriate for the work we are doing.

Offer the classes and not cancel them.

More interaction

Quicker, clearer guidance on difficult issues.

More interaction with our college on an individual basis. I've had difficulty getting a return phone call. They seem to be a policy board.

Q11C1 Satisfaction with Accounting Consultants policies & procedures. (If low rating) What would you like to see them do more of, less of, to further improve?

Other

They need to be simplified.

I think that all the accounting rules and regulations are way too complex, way too detailed and way too burdensome. Each individual rule or policy may be justified but the total weight is way too heavy for a small agency to handle. The bottom line is a huge agency may have all the accounting and policy staff to handle this but small agencies cannot keep track of it.

More specific policies/procedures

They need to have specific policies and procedures to specific institutions.

More detailed information

I would like them to be more complete and address more detailed issues. We have unique needs for our agency but it may not warrant the detailed attention from them. But the detail would be helpful to me. If they had on their Web site, a place where you could e-mail questions to them, they could respond to several of us if they get the same questions repeatedly. In general most of my instructions come through the State Board for Community Colleges and I don't usually see OFM's instructions directly.

Understand the different facets of each agency.

Accounting Consultants Group Customers

Q11C3 What, specifically has the Accounting consultants staff done over the past year that has made you more satisfied?

Other

With the change in management in the past few years it gets better and better each year. And besides management, insert new consultants. Big change, big change. Or much improved.

They have done a better job of assigning personnel that are responsive to the agencies' needs.

Actually they've done nothing. I've just gotten more involved with them. Just more involved in no certain way. In the past I wasn't as involved as before because of my tight schedule. So my schedule is now more flexible allowing me to get more involved with OFM.

Internet information/manual on-line/fund transfer

There's more information on the Internet than there used to be. It is finance stuff mostly.

They've provided us with more on-line information and they have streamlined some of the policies and procedures.

They put the Statewide Accounting Manual on-line.

Putting the manuals on-line. Having them be more accessible.

Changed their manual and made available on-line.

More knowledge/more information

More knowledgeable now than they were before. Continue to grow in knowledge of the systems.

They have tried to get us more information in a timely manner and really tried to get us to understand some of the changes that have taken place.

I think they're more knowledgeable in their training. They're beginning to cross-train so that other people can answer the question for you. And they get back to you in a timely manner.

Better/more timely communication

They've been more timely. We have increased contact with them, better relations, and solid information.

I am involved with them a lot more than I used to be.

Training/cross training of staff

The training. Well, I took it. I've only been here in this position less than a year and I had not taken any of the training before and so it did teach me quite a bit.

They have offered better training.

Accounting Consultants Group Customers

Q11C3 (cont.): What, specifically has the Accounting consultants staff done over the past year that has made you more satisfied?

Streamline/simplified policies and procedure/direction

Related to Policies and Procedures, they've posted it on-line and it's searchable which really helps with research time. Responses that I receive from the consultants are clear, concise, organized and meaningful.

Their stuff is a little easier to understand, meaning the directions.

The new Policies and Guidelines manual.

One of the main things is possibly putting Policies and Procedures on-line. It's a lot easier to get up-to-date information.

We have been included on reviews, the policy reviews and the revisions of manuals. In the last couple of years OFM has made improvement in becoming partners with the agencies rather than be gatekeepers. They have emphasized responsibilities and accountabilities as a shared outcome rather than it being that they're gatekeepers. I find them more able to work out mutual solutions.

More accessible/more responsive

It appears that they are more responsive, more timely, and more casual.

They have been a little more accessible.

More responsive.

1. Emphasis on customer service 2. Tie in to "Access Washington." 3. They gave agencies time to integrate changes into the new manual. 4. They are asking for input.

Better communication. Faster turnaround time for inquiries.

They are becoming more accessible.

Information is more accessible on the computer, OFM is available on-line and technology and communications have improved. Continental per diem rates and travel costs are more available.

System improvements

They supported changes to the agency Accounting system.

They have the electronic fund transfer. That's it.

Their work on the FASTRACK system in general has really improved it.

Basically improved the FASTRACK and AFRS systems to make it easier to track and consolidate our budget. Easier in the fact that I became more familiar with it, about some of the improvements. Agencies have also said they need certain information from FASTRACK and

Accounting Consultants Group Customers

OFM has come through with ways to get the information.

Q11C3 (cont.): What, specifically has the Accounting Consultants staff done over the past year that has made you more satisfied?

Manual improvement

The new SAAM manual. It's organized better and it is easier to locate information.

I think putting the manual on-line and making it totally accessible at my desk has just made life easier.

The policy manual, SAAM. It is the ease of use and also the link to reference, such as RCWs. That is really very helpful.

They've redone the policy manual which makes it easier to read and it is on the Internet. Also, they have made themselves more available.

Worked with the agencies to develop a better Accounting manual and worked well to get input from the agencies.

Personal Services Contracting Group Customers

Q8EA1 Personal Services Contracting Group makes decisions in a timely manner. (If low rating) What would you like to see them do more of, or less of, to further improve?

They simplified the process for contracting, such as personnel services so you don't have to go to bid as much. I would like to see them do more of this, I don't know whether this was internal or a legislative decision.

More communications to inform us more. I have to call up to get information.

Q8EH What additional products or services could the Personal Services Contracting Group provide that would be useful to you?

More/better training

What we have found is that because of constraints on Personal Services, we could not use consultants for over \$4,900. So we would hire staff and it would cost us more than that. Then they would leave and go on unemployment. We have a set of consultant rules that don't serve us well. We don't have flexibility over the \$4,900 dollar limit, and it costs us more. They could be helpful in showing us how to be successful with the current limits.

Onsite training and easier to follow instructions.

I think they need to give us more training and some of the policy needs to be more clear. In training, overall, what is a personal agreement versus other types such as client, when do we need to use them, and when do we not? They have written information that comes out. Some of that still leaves us with questions. It is nice to have clear examples and definitions.

More Web-site presence/more types of materials (means to get out info and news)

If the "Guide to Personal Services Contracting" is not on the Web site, I would like it to be.

An easier, more accessible, user-friendly Web site. This is the most efficient way for us. But for us, it assumes a familiarity with their system that we find hard to use. It is like looking up a word in the dictionary if you don't know how to spell it.

Some type of Web based reporting system. Reporting data collecting system.

Templates

More examples and contract templates for different types of agreements. That would be it.

Some more flexibility in their contract language. They have a standard format that's very, very long. If you wanted to customize it's difficult.

Templates, such as the addendum to a contract. They could explain what they do. They are unfriendly and a big mystery to me.

Better examples of how to do something rather than just regulatory information. A how-to manual.

Federal and State guidelines

A better alignment between State and Federal Personal Services Contracting guidelines.

Personal Services Contracting Group Customers

“Better” means more consistency.

To go to the Legislature and see the relationship of the stringent rules that govern higher education. We have some unique needs.

Q8EH (cont.): What additional products or services could the Personal Services Contracting Group provide that would be useful to you?

More/quicker information

Additional information. I don't get all the booklets. I don't know if it's our agency or somebody else. I have to go to somebody else if I'm looking for something.

More work - jobs educational material. Information on Personal Service and Contracting.

Quicker turnaround time.

Quick response. They, in some degree, act as interpreters of state policies on processes and there are misinterpretations among the agencies and we need their lead to clarify and make a decision. On both ends, it would be useful if OFM staff would hold a forum - I have never met them - an FYI forum to see their hierarchy and their communications. It is like a secret club.

Clearer policy

The difference from agency-to-agency is dramatic and interpretations are different, so when making changes it is difficult. Need some basic rules that apply to all agencies. Simplifying the steps to make it clear would be helpful. It is not always easy to know the steps since there are so many steps.

Setting two levels of limits makes additional paperwork. For each contractor I have to set an overall limit and also for individual contractors and it makes it difficult to estimate the costs two years out. Changes have to be amended but I keep a monthly spreadsheet and could give monthly up-dates. I know some people try to work the system. The two people I work with have been helpful and I try to give as much information as I can. A lot of rules, but some people aren't reasonable.

They offer all we need/have done everything they can

I think they provide all the information I have needed. Also get their publications here, which are updated. Overall I have dealt with OFM on travel and purchasing and I have always received excellent service from those people as well.

I can't think of anything. Everything has been fine and anything we need they have.

Nothing more than what they do.

Everything that I use in Contracts is fine - can't think of an additional product.

Nothing in particular

None.

None.

Personal Services Contracting Group Customers

Q11D1 Satisfaction with products & services from the Personal Services Contracting Group. (If low) What would you like to see them do more of, or less of, to further improve?

Other

Modify some of their filing requirements. If they're going to request information, use it.

I'm not sure, but I have not seen them add any value. They just approve the information I present.

Information-consistency

I have the manual. I need simple steps. It is a great backup when you go to the next level, but I need something else like an Executive Summary. Anything that would reduce the need or amount of documentation - from the agency perspective. In terms of time, turnaround time. 13 days is a problem when we are dealing with a crisis. A crisis from a communications view. We deal with media. There are lots of times when we need the expertise which we don't have and two weeks is a lot of time when the Contractor can't start. The important thing is to understand the steps.

Be more consistent in information. We need more directions.

More dialogue with colleges to help us maximize our use of consultants. The restrictions are so great that it hardly makes it worthwhile.

Don't know/Not sure

I didn't know there was a Personal Services Contracting Guide. So, outreach.

Personal Services Contracting Group Customers

Q11D3 What, specifically has the Personal Services Contracting staff done over the past year that has made you more satisfied?

Other

We have had more contracts this year and depended on OFM more this year.

I've used it more.

Improved manual/systems/training

They actually help us provide training for our staff. They have been very available on the phone and have worked with us on contracting questions and problems.

The guide is clearer; they up-graded it.

They have refined the FASTRACK program that makes it possible to get better reports with less paper. I can pinpoint exactly what I want and go straight to it. That is a lot, trust me.

They have improved their guide. They made it easier to understand and more concise. It used to be hard to differentiate between Personal and Purchases processes.

More user-friendly manuals and training. User-friendly, meaning if I have a specific type of Personal Services Contract, I can see from the manual how to relate the manual to the agency's needs.

We've had to centralize our contracts and we have interfaced with OFM. They have been supportive with that.

More responsive

They have been more responsive, meaning more timely answers to questions.

They're more responsive and seem to be more service-oriented.

Service orientation

They have been customer service-oriented.

They are working with the other agencies more on Personal Service Contracts and they are talking more with us on what our needs are. They're making tremendous efforts on this issue.

Better directions/simplified

They have changed a few things so that I understand it better. It's pretty straight-forward. Like on the janitorial contract, they worked through it with me step-by-step instead of just dumping the packet on me. They made sure I had someone who was qualified to do the work. In years past, sometimes I ended up with someone who wasn't qualified.

They have quick turnaround on our Personal Contracting stuff. It's much quicker and the staff is more responsive.

The effort to simplify the contractor specifications, and raising the amount before you have to get bids; if less than \$5,000, no bid, three bids if \$5,000-\$10,000. This has helped.

Better directions; the receptionist is helpful in directing me to the right people for me to speak to.

Personal Services Contracting Group Customers

Q11D3 (cont.) What, specifically has the Personal Services Contracting staff done over the past year that has made you more satisfied?

More accessible/helpful

They have been very helpful and reasonable in a couple of our larger contracts, and we have no contracting expertise in the Agency. Helping us get to our objective, you know, instead of putting up all the roadblocks and rejecting any contract we might send over. They worked with us.

Population and Forecasting Group Questions

Q8DG What additional products or information could the Population and Forecasting Group provide that would be useful to you?

More detail/specific forecasting geographically

I would like population by census block and population by urban growth area.

I am not sure how official their caseload forecasts are since there is an official caseload forecast body, but it would be nice to get a wider dissemination from OFM on their unofficial TANF and medical caseload forecasts.

Simplify explanation of the formulas that they utilize for estimating population. I think that's about really all that comes to mind, essentially.

Growth management population projection. In 1985, the Legislature passed a bill and OFM was required to generate some population projections and these projections were growth management population projections and the cities would like to see new population projections for growth management.

Additional forecasting on smaller populations. Tie more forecasting towards school districts.

More economical and demographic data supplied on a regular basis.

More detail/specific forecasting with demographic and other subgroups

More demographic information; income per capita, ages, that kind of stuff.

Maybe more detailed information, not just on population but some of the other demographics, in between the census years. Maybe some training, regional workshops to explain to people how the projections are developed would be interesting - some public forums to explain all that.

Disaggregated information across ethnic groups. For example, it does not help me when they say Asian American-I need those groups more divided as in Thai, Japanese-Asian, Chinese-Asian Filipino-Asian, etc.

The annual median income for the city would be helpful. There are other data that would be helpful to us but I would have to think about it. I think median income is available for the state but not for the city. The contacts with them have been very beneficial and helpful to me. They have faxed in for research questions, referred data to me and they have referred me to various Web sites.

The household size and vacancy rates for our jurisdiction on any given year.

More frequent population updates

County level population totaled on a more frequent basis, and county income data.

More up-to-date information on vacancy rates and occupancy rates for smaller market areas. We need to have more up-to-date vacancy rates. The out of date vacancy rate estimates cost us thousands of residents and large amounts of money.

Provide more information/help on technology

Forms that allow me to inquire as to the number of occupants, and their names, in a household.

Population and Forecasting Group Questions

Comments about forms/clearer/specific

Their forms each year change, and they need to provide a little clearer direction. It would be nice to have a synopsis of what has changed. Also, on their forms themselves, to be more specific. A couple of their forms are complicated - new frame housing column 3, and also the way they reference the 1990 numbers compared to last year's form. It's not clear.

Q8DG (cont.): What additional products or information could the Population and Forecasting Group provide that would be useful to you?

Their annual estimated population and the forms to do that. I guess the forms could be a little clearer. Possibly a little better information on reporting annexations.

Additional Internet products

Would like additional products and information available on the Internet.

Other miscellaneous

I guess regional workshops in updating or revisiting population forecasts on an annual, semi-annual basis. A half-day seminar sponsored by OFM where folks in the field and OFM staff could meet face to face and discuss population forecast issues within that region, with regard to the upcoming annual forecast.

We are a little town and don't use them. I filled out the report on trailer houses we have in town. We have no growth since there is a moratorium on water and sewer expansion.

Possible Web-based access to standardized enrollment reports for the higher education.

Information on persons with disabilities.

Help with mapping, especially when there are new annexations.

They could include more information on the Web.

The only thing I can really suggest is when I go over there and request hard copies of data, I'm always kind of given a hard time if I need five or ten copies of something.

They offer all we need/have done everything they can

None. They are pretty much on top of it.

They are doing fine.

For our purposes, they are very helpful. I give them high marks here.

Nothing. The service we receive is for a small area, but is fine. We could receive more money, however.

I am happy with the products they give me.

I'm satisfied with what they provide now.

None. I have received everything that I could have possibly asked for and plus.

I have been very happy with their products.

Population and Forecasting Group Questions

Q11E1 Satisfaction with Population & Forecasting products & services. (If low) What would you like to see them do more of, or less of, to further improve?

They do not accept city building code and development data. They put you through the exercise of doing it and then they do not accept the numbers. We will show a 100 person increase and they will say only 10. It appears they have a preconceived number.

Display some of their data differently than they do. I think they have a ton of data that they keep showing in the same old way.

Q11E3 What, specifically has the Population and Forecasting staff done over the past year that has made you more satisfied?

Information more understandable/improved/current

They have improved their information and understandability of that information compared to last year.

They have improved their format and brought their numbers up-to-date. There was a two month lag before. Now they've made it easier to read. It's more current. The Web page is new and it's easier to use. It's also a good tool because it allows you to access the data on the Web.

More responsible/helpful

They are more responsive. On forecasting, they get back to me a lot quicker. Their graphics are better now; they use color.

Personnel change

I'm dealing with a different person and (that person) understands what I need a little better.

The fact that I've had personal interaction with (name); and that some of the things are now happening in our county. (That person) has been extremely helpful.

Web access

The Web site has made data more easily accessible.

The Web presentation of the data.

It is available on the Internet and easier for me to access. I found this out this past year.

Financial Systems Group Customers

Q11G1 Satisfaction with the way Financial Systems Group meets agency's business needs. (If low) What would you like to see them do more of, less of, to further improve?

I'd like to see a system that would accommodate the unique needs of individual agencies. Cost Accounting.

Allow the statewide reporting system to somehow incorporate agency-specific information needs to better meet agency information. To have an infrastructure for all of their needs.

In this area it doesn't support what our agency does. The things we do regarding this system we do ourselves. It's like an added layer on top of what we already do. Small agencies use this system to manage their budgets but the larger ones don't. There's no separation between agencies. You have to use the system whether you need it or not.

Provide better systems, better meaning they have an accounting system that does not accommodate our needs so we have developed an accounting system to meet our needs. The AFRS system does not. The systems need to be more flexible.

Q11H1 Satisfaction with way Financial Systems Group supports receipts and management of accounts receivable. (If low) What would you like to see them do more of, or less of, to further improve?

Our systems aren't compatible in the accounts receivable - I don't know that they ever will be. The receivables we have are from non-appropriate funds and those are maintained outside the treasurer's office.

Provide clear and brief training. That's what we need, we can budget to our hearts content, if we know what is going on.

I don't think they have a system that handles accounts receivable.

Not to promote and develop new systems for the agencies without having the resources to be able to use it. Like having a class.

Agencies require a level of detailed information that the statewide systems don't support. We need to either have agencies incorporate their specific needs into their systems or have the systems work together to provide a more comprehensive data set.

More sub-accounting where you would have spenders keep track of deposits.

Q11I1 Satisfaction with preparation & submittal of budget requests & allotments. (If low) What would you like to see them do more of, or less of, to further improve?

Other

It's like meet the actual requirements of the Legislature, for example. We have to track 6-year expenditures, and OFM isn't set up for that.

Eliminate requirements that have no purpose in the decision making of the funding process.

Financial Systems Group Customers

Q1111 (cont.) Satisfaction with preparation & submittal of budget requests & allotments. (If low) What would you like to see them do more of, or less of, to further improve?

Interact with the agencies

Ask the agencies how they want the budget submitted and work with a larger user group.

Develop a system that meets the unique needs of different agencies. Like for us, Cost Accounting.

More interactive reporting to tailor reports to specific needs. Better access to personnel costs in a better reporting form.

Would like them to listen to the agencies. They seem to already have their minds made up.

Redo/develop better systems/eliminate use of mainframe computer

I think in terms of customer service as the group and they do a great job. They are considerate, knowledgeable and always willing to go out of their way to get the information into the system. But having said that, the system itself is terrible. The allotment system is difficult to use. It's basically an old transactional system so you can't see what you're doing - you can't instantly see what your balances are or anything else and when you need to make changes, it's also very difficult. You have to do a lot of calculations - it's a terrible system.

Get a more user-friendly system, user-friendly, meaning for TAPS system that would have control, totals and cross checking of entries to avoid duplication of entries. It would allow similar monthly entries to be entered simultaneously. It would provide reports that are easy to understand and easy to flag errors. It would allow on-line edit checks, and on-line summaries. TAPS is an ugly, ugly system.

Get rid of the stuff that no one ever looks at.

Get away from mainframe. Particularly in the budget development and allotment process. Go Windows-based, more user-friendly systems that everybody's used to and has more flexibility.

Develop a modern preparation system. Develop a windows-based allotment preparation system for statewide use that is user-friendly. They're actually doing something now - they are developing the BASS system. So I would say just continue to develop the BASS system.

Make the system less cumbersome.

The system they have right now is called BDS and its an interim step and it's really clunky, not user-friendly. I would not have released it at this point. If they had the whole system up and running, it would be better. But it puts more work on the agencies.

They need to completely redo all the mainframe systems to be more windows oriented, less cumbersome, and more user-friendly. All the things that users complain about mainframes.

Personnel improvements/training

Performance-based budget needs to be clearly defined. They can't hand out an inch-thick book and say do the budget. We're getting the people that sign the budget instructions but not the people who are preparing it. We need the right people! What's that game kids used to play where they're whispering in each others' ears? Telephone? Well, that's what's happening here.

Financial Systems Group Customers

Q11I1 (cont.): Satisfaction with preparation & submittal of budget requests & allotments? (If low) What would you like to see them do more of, or less of, to further improve?

They have their duties divided to the point that there's not one person that understands the entire specifics of a project. We're getting people, (analysts) giving us bad advice concerning our account and it's only because they're giving us people who don't understand our account. And they don't understand OFM either. One hand doesn't know what the other is doing. So they should get someone who understands not only our account but understands OFM as well, that would help us. They should improve their training of their people first. Let them understand who they are, and also understand our accounts.

Improve customer service

Continue down the path of upgrading the new budget development system by truly listening to customer feedback.

Q11J1 Satisfaction with time collection, labor distribution & cost allocation. (If low) What would you like to see them do more of, or less of, to further improve?

Helping agency systems and the statewide systems work better together so that we have a complete data set that incorporates specific information from agencies along with the generic statewide information.

Right now they really don't have a wage distribution cost allocation process at all. What is there is very limited and you have to kind of play with it to make it work at all. We need to have an activity-based cost accounting system to meet the performance measure requirements on the budget side, under the state statutes.

Some changes in the training for accountants. There's a disconnection between the people they train and when the trainees come in using transaction codes and no longer have to use a ledger. They don't have sight of balances and financial statements, so they don't make good decisions or know how to apply what they're learning.

Meet the unique needs of different agencies.

Q11K1 Satisfaction with information that supports financial management (If low) What would you like to see them do more of, or less of, to further improve?

Take a leadership role in financial management role. I would like to see them act more as the comptroller for the state.

Don't cut our budget requests the way they do. OFM is feared around here. The relationship is not one of levels of satisfaction; it's adversarial. I personally have little contact with them other than using AFRS periodically, but from what I hear around the department, they just chop our budgets horribly when they get them. In fairness, I'm a (scientist), and I'm not familiar with their mandates, which are probably quite different from ours. But still, we do not have satisfaction where they are concerned.

Financial Systems Group Customers

Develop a system that meets the unique needs of different agencies. Plus here I would add that they are very expensive to use.

The system doesn't support our needs at all and we wouldn't want them to.

Q11K3 What specifically has the Financial Systems staff done over the past year that has made you more satisfied?

Other

They are trying to improve. They are doing their best. It is a little bit slow; they are security conscious. I use them a lot more than I did a year ago.

They have added more staff, streamlined more processes, and the workload is not overwhelming on the staff that supports us and other agencies. It is a more evenly distributed workload. More efficiency in the operation of the accounting systems. Generally they do a good job. There are a lot of different agencies and personalities. They deal with smaller agencies and it is a difficult balancing act. There is a difference between being with the Governor's office and other small agencies. I have been both and for the smaller agencies, the follow-through was not adequate on customer service.

Internet/electronic availability of information

Having electronic transfer system. I can't think of anything else.

The new automation. The Internet. The general information that OFM has on the Internet, the definitions and policies. I can go to the Internet and find it faster. And the budget development system. This is the first time they have had it - the BASS system. I'm really excited about it.

The way they do monthly reports now; they are electronic instead of paper, which means we get them faster.

I am happy to see them looking forward to automatic travel vouchers and EFT, electronic fund transfers.

Providing easier access to data to review systems that are on the Internet.

Not just our department but others as well have had better access to them because of their electronic access to great products.

Personnel/training

In their communications, of direction, instructions have been greatly improved. They are more inclusive in including us in the process.

They've been willing to talk about training opportunities in a much more proactive way. Before, their training systems were not good and they have accepted that fact and are working to correct it.

They helped us with the applications technology.

Having everything computerized. They have come up and had training with us on the systems. The FASTRACK training.

They put on training in the FASTRACK system.

Financial Systems Group Customers

More information and training.

Financial Systems Group Customers

Q11K3 (cont.): What specifically has the Financial Systems staff done over the past year that has made you more satisfied?

Timely informative response

Increased timeliness of information. That is primarily it.

They seem to have gone the extra mile in physically coming over here and helping us on some areas of difficulty.

They improved their products. The new ones are more user-friendly and get the information to us faster.

They have been working with us. We've gotten a lot more assistance than last year. All our committees - the BASS, the Ultimate Purchase Systems, the JV payment – are working with a good group of people.

More timely information. They are customer service-oriented and more friendly.

In accounts receivable, we have solved problems that occurred when we first went on-line. They have responded well to our requests for assistance.

Friendly/helpful/responses

They are including the clients in development of the financial systems.

Just a little bit more helpful.

They gave us access to current numbers instead of the printed AFRS which were behind in the past. So now I can find out where I am rather than where I was three months ago.

They are more responsive and they are using more Web and e-mail exchanges.

Their responsiveness. They never cease to impress.

They are quicker to respond and are friendly and willing to work with you.

Just by making themselves more accessible, by phone and on the Internet.

Website improvements

They have a new warrant cancellation process that they have a pilot project out in, and now it's available to the rest of us. It looks good. I like their new OFM Web site with the training schedules on there and all the bits and pieces applying to State Accounting.

Their Web site has improved.

Developing new Web based technology.

Financial Systems Group Customers

Q11K3 (cont.): What specifically has the Financial Systems staff done over the past year that has made you more satisfied?

FASTRACK-specific mention

The implementation of the FASTRACK program. They have put all of their financial reports on CD's.

FASTRACK because it applies to all the needs, to the majority of questions that you ask. Mainly financial management, expenditures and receipts, and it's in a readable format.

They have come out with FASTRACK and it is much more amenable than the AFRS system. Amenable in that AFRS has always been in hard copy, it does not lend itself to scanning. Now with FASTRACK we can select the data we need and save it in an Excel file. We don't have to re-key in data again.

FASTRACK, the budget accounting.

They've come out with some new reporting called FASTRACK. Also putting reports on CD and making vendor payments by electronic fund transfer. That's been a big help.

The FASTRACK system. The availability of information through FASTRACK.

FASTRACK.

FASTRACK. It gives us information timely right up to the day.

Their FASTRACK product. The improvements in customer service and their willingness to put into that product what I need to do my job. Their revised policy and procedures manual is much better.

Better communication

They've heard you and paid attention to what we have said, and they are putting out an effort to make things better.

They are increasing their communication with us. That's about it.

More customer input in designing systems to meet customer needs. They are nice people to work with. They are very pleasant.

They have been able to clarify what's expected in a performance-based budget. So there's more clarity in the goals.

There have been improved communications on procedures and up-dates. Training has been available.

That computer program has been outstanding and the support from that has been helpful. The staff that administers it, they're easy to deal with and highly motivated. The program is easier to understand and it's an improvement over the old AFRS.

They have demonstrated a better effort to communicate and work with others who are affected by their decisions before going ahead and just doing it without telling us. They used to do that big time, with an attitude to go with it.

Financial Systems Group Customers

Q11K3 (cont.): What specifically has the Financial Systems staff done over the past year that has made you more satisfied?

Systems; changes/improvements/additions

They help in allowing us access to their system. Previously, we couldn't because of their position on the Internet.

It has to do with the development of the BASS system. Using the BDS in BASS is more user-friendly than previous system.

They have initiated efforts to replace AFRS.

They've developed some new budgeting tools. They're a little bit more up to date and easier to use.

They have been updating several of their old antiquated systems.

They have changed the budget system.

There are better tools for using the information they provide. Better tools, meaning our financial systems -- BASS plus others and the new budget system. The budget instructions this year were very meaningful.

Developing the BASS system and on-line access to information.

The way that their EFT payment is better, and they have a cancelled check system that works better. The upcoming travel voucher system works better too.

Development of new BASS system.

They moved forward with a Budget Development System.

Everything is helpful to me to do my job. The AFRS system. I use it everyday.

They have added new systems and tried to work out systems so it is easier for the consumer to use. By easier I mean they have added new features so the reporting system is more in-depth to find data items you need. Each individual needs different data items and they have made it more diversified than in past years.

Changes to AFRS for one thing, and publishing their guide that you need to know the system, the software documentation. Since the changes, it has helped with the AFRS by making the research easier.

Their budget systems are a great improvement and the work to get Internet-based applications is good. But the accounting side is still weak or outdated. The budget systems are more flexible and it is intuitive. Agencies can take it and use it. It's just very flexible. That's the best thing and the reporting side of it is improved too, meaning the reporting tools they've put into it.

They've redeveloped the budget system for both operating and capital budget. I'm very satisfied with these new systems. They're much easier to work with, much more user-friendly, and provide better information.

Systems development to streamline processes.

Financial Systems Group Customers

Don't know/not sure

I can't answer that - I had no contact a year ago. But just seeing how they do their job, the trainers and people who set up the training are real good. Getting the classes we want and notifying us of any changes are very good.

Other Executive Level Questions

Q7H How would you rate OFM overall for helping you understand the fit between your agency's priorities and the Governor's priorities? (Comments volunteered)

We are an independent counsel and we don't report to the Governor or OFM. We are politically isolated by design. We perform caseload forecasts for the council, DSHS, school enrollment and prisons.

We are a legislative agency.

We are not involved so much in the budget area.

I don't recall anything coming across my desk that addresses that.

High rating of 6 is based upon the work with the budget sections.

We work with the Legislature and OFM is not situated to advise us on their priorities.

OFM does not help at all in this regard.

Q7I Please rate the OFM commitment to helping your agency succeed (Comments volunteered)

Bear in mind that my interface with OFM is very limited and basically only in the financial statement area.

They are a 7 from top to bottom. The OFM director responds to my director, they send letters, e-mails and they have been wonderful.

Q7K How well does OFM communicate and coordinate operations within its own agency? (Comments volunteered)

It does not matter who I talk with I always get a written answer back within 48 hours, so it must be good. There is one person I would like to give an 8, (name), he is correct and reliable on information and quick to help. I would be lost without him.

I haven't noticed any problems.

There is a disconnect between the Small Agency Accounting group and the overall state Accounting group. Each decision is very good but I don't feel they exchange information. I feel this is especially the case between operating budget and capital budget staff.

I think they're much improved.

They don't talk to each other very well.

Other Executive Level Questions

Q7K1 Please rate the extent to which you feel OFM has improved the communication and coordination within OFM within the past 12 months. (Comments volunteered)

It has been very consistent.

They are improving but they need to go a little more.

For our agency, the hard copy information also has e-mail so it makes me feel that I am up to speed in a timely manner. I don't need phone calls but the e-mail helps so much.

They've gotten some new system and they've been pretty pro-active with us.

I haven't seen that much change.

It is hard to say since I always get good support. I get answers and am not put off with, "we will have to check."

They changed our budget and accounting people.

I don't have any feel for that.

Q7K2 What would you like to see OFM do more of or less of to further improve (communication and coordination within OFM)?

Support and serve mindset. This means instead of what's convenient for them, they look at what's being accomplished. I would like to see them do more outreach in terms of identifying budget problems.

I have really appreciated the degree of communication on the Legislature and where they are on the legislative process. This is very much better. OFM lets us know when various budget sections have passed from one house to another. This has been very helpful. Coordination between the capital and the operating budgets needs to improve. They preach it, but don't practice it.

Just improve communication on the budget between the budget area and the accounting area. There needs to be more sharing of information.

Better communication with the agencies, a better budget system, and keeping budget analysts assigned to one agency for longer periods.

Be more open with agencies in accounting and budgeting.

More working with the agencies means more of a hands-on role, more of an advocacy role. Significantly less turnover in analysts would improve things.

When they have changes to the manuals, notify us of the changes, especially since it is on-line.

Other Executive Level Questions

Talk to each other. The accounting and budget division need to count on each other.

Some closer coordination is needed so the left and right hand know what the other is doing.

Q7K2 (cont.) What would you like to see OFM do more of or less of to further improve (communication and coordination within OFM)?

I would like to see their financial systems be more useful to agencies. Their financial systems basically are not useful in managing finances; the systems are just useful for counting beans.

I would like their systems to accommodate the unique needs of different agencies, specifically, their financial systems. They do not provide any Cost Accounting capacity that my agency needs.

Increase coordination between the policy and budget office - these appear very disjointed and not in sync.

Budget and accounting consultants, the systems tend to be valuable for OFM, not ours. It makes their lives easier, not ours. The form of the reports and the kinds of queries tend to help OFM, they do not reduce the number of reports that we need. The biennial budget is voluminous, we have to produce it and enter all the data for our own use, in addition to meeting their needs. The end product doesn't get it as far as they want. Not to blame. As a citizen, the budget is extremely complex and costly and the value is debatable. Like to see the cost of producing the budget for agency, OFM, and Legislature.

They need to return our calls. When they give us deadlines, have someone there to answer our calls.

A stronger role in statewide reporting and agency information is needed. Helping agencies with their systems more centrally, giving better guides centrally, and how agencies can use that information.

They need a better accounting system. People are usually friendly so I don't have a problem, but I have been here a long time and I know a lot of people.

It would help if they understood the business of the client better. They've had in the past 3 different analysts every biannual. When we have to teach somebody new it takes 2 years for him or her to absorb it and by the time they get it, they're gone. Before, we had someone for 10 years and that's on the budget side.

From the Budget group I would like to see more newsletters or e-mails similar to what the Accounting group puts out.

I guess getting to know the new players, and they are all virtually new in the last 12 months. That's the capital budgeting section. Coordination is needed between the operating and capital budgets. I know that is a stated goal of theirs, but I will state it again here.

They need to have better internal communication regarding policy changes from top to bottom.

Other Executive Level Questions

When they meet with the Governor and policy changes, they need to communicate it to all analysts.

Other Executive Level Questions

Q22 What one or two things, if any, has OFM done over the past two years that have been of help to you or your organization?

Other

The consolidation or the presentation of a spreadsheet for payroll reconciliation so it's all in one place.

The most important is consolidating different reporting systems into one.

OFM has facilitated ways in which the college borrows money from the state.

They assisted my organization in obtaining its capital appropriation in the 1998-99 supplemental session, the long session. (Stated dollar amount.) They have been very supportive of the college in its capital needs.

They have been a great help to me. I work in the payroll department and they are helpful at year's end. They are pretty much the ones I turn to. I am very pleased with the two people I work with. I have a lot of respect for them.

OFM distributed information on 601 revenue limits. Also, the electronic Internet payment processing.

They've just helped us a lot more than in the past. The assistance they provided is more than in the past, and we are more knowledgeable about what they can do for us.

The pocket data book is very convenient and handy.

Follow-up on annexation certificates has been very helpful.

Electronic fund transfer for staff.

They have worked with us in designing a solution for us in statewide data collection.

Implementing the EFT process.

Attention to agency management fees.

They have automated some systems, like the BPS and PMTES.

I haven't seen the data yet, but they added a couple of questions on disability to the state population survey.

The controller does most of the relationship with OFM. She does most of the contacts and we do little. So, really nothing to say.

Like it when they come out and audit. I think that's great. It keeps you straight and that's why I like it.

Other Executive Level Questions

Coordination, getting people to the table; help interact with legislature

Effective coordination with legislative leadership. I'm very happy with where the budget process stands vis-à-vis the Legislature.

Q22 (cont.) What one or two things, if any, has OFM done over the past two years that have been of help to you or your organization?

Working with us in understanding our tough budget issues, our budget request to the Legislature, helping us understand how to work with the legislative staff, and advocate for us with the Governor and Legislators.

Providing guidance, assistance, and support in the development of major legislative proposals.

We request information from vendors and OFM automatically mails them out and I don't have to go pick them up. And the electronic funds transfers has been helpful.

The budget reports and legislative budget bills. They're timely and we are given notice as to when they are available.

They improved the information systems and their increased communications for legislative and budget matters. They improved information systems with the development of the Web applications.

The Budget office has sent out e-mail on what is happening in the Legislature and it is the best thing they have ever done.

They've helped me find policies to perform my value engineering study. They also assisted in determining policies for construct-ability reviews study. They don't normally do that

They have been helpful in defining recently passed legislation. Generally the less they manage the more effective we can be. It seems like we have an Attorney General assigned whose question is, "How can I help you accomplish what you need to?" But OFM is more like, "How can we keep you from doing what you are supposed to do?" The Governor is very helpful but OFM seems regulatory and controlling. When OFM comes calling, I don't know anyone who says, "Yippee, put on the coffee pot." They are to be commended for asking these questions, and I hope that change will happen. It is a very influential function to improve public service.

In the last two to three months they revised or lobbied against a couple of laws that were obnoxious and got them amended.

They have helped to explain complex issues to Legislators and Legislative staff.

Providing good/credible/unbiased/up-to- date information

They have given us information on how we handle or code a particular action. They have helped us. The information is mostly accurate, although there have been a few cases where it was inaccurate.

Other Executive Level Questions

They have provided us with the population data. Also we're working on a joint research project together.

They have updated their inventory policies and simplified them.

They give us quick response to questions we have and they show willingness to help us.

They provided a personal explanation of the methodology of estimating annual population and certification of annexation.

Q22 (cont.) What one or two things, if any, has OFM done over the past two years that have been of help to you or your organization?

The enrollment projections have been helpful.

They provide current information so I can apply it to my job.

By answering our questions.

The data they provide is extremely useful for forecasting purposes.

They have been helpful by clarifying and streamlining county assessments and clarifying OFM's rules for allotments and FTE's.

Just recently they explained the estimated trending for our county.

They have recently amended the worksheet we use for forecasting so it's more user-friendly than in past years. Also this year they have provided data from the previous year right on the form, which is helpful.

They have sent someone over here to help explain the bookkeeping to me. That's the important thing. They set it so I could understand it.

Knowledge/expertise of personnel in their specialties/ leadership

We have always found personal services very helpful in solving problems before they occur. We have a good rapport with them.

They have hired an education analyst who is very open and accessible.

Helping us understand IRS procedures and policies.

They provide good support for the audit function. Their information is timely. They have good working knowledge of agency's accounting systems. A lot of them are former auditors. They understand the types of problems that state accounting staff have and can help them.

(Name) is always available to answer questions.

They drove to (city name) in inclement weather to give a class on census taking for this area.

Other Executive Level Questions

The most impressive is the effort on management's part to listen and try to make improvements suggested by their employees.

I can think of nothing unusual or specific. I'm pleased with the help I get from the Financial Systems people. They do the best they can. I'm pretty happy with the fact that they're there if you need to get someone into training or if you have a problem. They're responsive - so I've had some good experiences in that area.

OFM has help with the vendor table report.

Q22 (cont.) What one or two things, if any, has OFM done over the past two years that have been of help to you or your organization?

Smooth, fast, direct processing of information

They have streamlined our financial reporting and the reports we get are far better than ten years ago.

Just being available to provide data and explanations for the forecasts.

They have answered our questions right away and found the answers for us. We are kind of an outside agency.

Policy directiveness

I had a person in the policy area that supported my program when others weren't. In fact he probably saved my program.

They have been responsive to working with us and have been acting as an intermediary between the IRS and state auditor offices.

They have helped with the interpretation of OFM policy.

Accounting/AFRS/ADD support and information

The AFRS. They keep improving it, which is good. We can get easier access in preparing reports. We can construct more reports easier now than it used to be.

The new systems - the accounts receivable, the budget system that they redid, and the travel system, which they are currently building. They have put regulations and procedures in plainer English. Their management cares more that their decisions affect all agencies based on good business sense.

I think the AFRS report has helped me with what limited stuff I do with it. FASTRACK has helped me too.

Updating of AFRS reporting system has improved significantly.

The new accounts payable/receivable system has been a plus. Also FASTRACK has been a big help even though I don't use it.

Other Executive Level Questions

I think they've improved their capital planning efforts; they are more receptive to our ideas.

They are doing a system right now to make AFRS systems and the way you use it better. And they work closer with us in doing what they need. FRIP - for financial reporting improvement project - that's the project!

They've helped us get on AFRS and Central Payroll System. Their customer service representatives have improved. Two individuals, one in the budget office, have excellent customer service. They are knowledgeable, very responsive, courteous, concerned and informative.

Q22 (cont.) What one or two things, if any, has OFM done over the past two years that have been of help to you or your organization?

AFRS is a mainframe and antique system but has so much momentum that it is hard to replace. But the agencies have an AFRS batch interface, which has an unlimited potential. We used to have to re-key. We now do the accounting and then re-enter it to the computer. They are extending the AFRS indefinitely. Also FASTRACK, which is designed to improve reports over the Internet. This is good and an improvement.

They've improved the screens in AFRS. They made them more user-friendly.

We work with the small agency compliance service. They do the accounting, vendor payments, payroll, and budget. They make sure everything is done properly.

Producing AFRS reports, or providing the information for the reports. I guess they don't actually produce them; they just give us the data.

AFRS has improved by being easier to use.

(Name) prepares reports on fund balances, revenues and treasury accounts. Those are valuable and timesaving. OFM budget staff takes a great deal of interest in our program. They visit our sites to come and look at our program.

By helping to clarify IRS regulations. On the Accounting side, they've helped interpret what IRS requirements are.

Accounts receivable project was good. They revamped some of the Policies and Procedures and got rid of some of the antiquated data and made it more user-friendly.

They put the AFRS report on CD and reorganized the Policies and Procedures manual.

They assisted with AFRS transmittal to find an easier way to transmit my data. I know they've answered a lot of questions for me about travel issues.

We have gotten their reports and their willingness to look up reports regarding accounts payable is great.

Other Executive Level Questions

Budget process/information/assistance/BASS system

They put Policies and Procedures and the budget stuff on the Web sites while making access to getting what we need quicker.

The new BASS systems look pretty helpful. I haven't gotten fully in to them, but they look good. And they put Policies and Procedures on the Internet. In addition, some of their IRS-related training has been good.

Better budget briefing and good staff, specifically in the national resources budgeting section.

The BASS system being online and being current, that is the main thing.

They greatly improved the budget instructions this year, from what I am told by others closer to that process.

Q22 (cont.) What one or two things, if any, has OFM done over the past two years that have been of help to you or your organization?

They have this new capital budget system, CBS, it is web-based. Another thing, they are very involved. They participate excellently in the planning of some of our projects. That's very important to the results of our projects. Give them a seven there.

They're most helpful in areas where we're talking about needs of the program and putting together the budget

The new BASS system.

The new budget program is helpful. WARP is helpful, meaning easier for us to plug in the data,

They've developed a new budgeting system. We haven't used it yet, but I think it's going to be a great help. It's going to make it easier to do budgeting.

BDS; budget development systems.

The Forecasting Division and their publications have been helpful. The chart books, the information for the Budget Division, the one for forecast analyst, 601 issues and the Governor's program 98-01.

They provide budgeting assistance and guidance as well as assistance with regulatory reform and policy development.

They provide good budget information.

Training that they provided on the new BDS system and the technical support we've gotten from the FASTRACK have been very helpful.

We get advice all the time from Accounting. The Financial Systems Group came over personally to help us out.

Other Executive Level Questions

The new Budget Development System has been quite helpful.

They developed the Budget Development System. It's all Web-based. It's a system where you can prepare your budget now without using it. They have developed a system that is an improvement over their prior BPS system. They changed the look and readability of their accounting system.

The computerized capital budget program.

They have streamlined the Budget Development System, the biennial budget.

Assistance with supplemental budget planning.

Reconfiguring the Accounting Policy and Procedure manual. And it's yet to be seen if the new budget system is an improvement; we'll find out this summer when we use it.

The BASS system. I haven't used the BASS system yet but I have had training and I can see how it will be easier.

Q22 (cont.) What one or two things, if any, has OFM done over the past two years that have been of help to you or your organization?

The accounting system they set up. The SOLOMON system

They have the new budget system. That's toward a better fiscal note process. I think their Web page is good. They have a lot of manuals and they're all online with just anything you want.

Through it's budget priorities and budget, our college benefited in that we have not faced cuts. There have been exercises to look at cost savings but we have held our own when others haven't. We have our say and they have theirs and however it falls out.

They have been of the greatest assistance with the budget. We had revenue go away with I-695 and they assisted with replacing the revenue. They do a really good job for the (customer name). I am really pleased.

They have kept the books. AFRS.

The first thing is the degree to which they are providing information on the budget process as the Legislature works on it. The second is clarifying the budget instructions. Clarifying, by making their expectations a lot clearer, to help us understand what they need and why, and also how the different components link together. The strategic plan is now the driver for the budget and is now very consistently and clearly being incorporated in the budget instructions.

The creation of the new budget system, BASS and BDS.

They have streamlined the budget process and made it more user-friendly.

They have expanded the number of tools available to our agency. Such as BASS, FASTRACK,

Other Executive Level Questions

and the accounts receivable system.

The development of new budget systems, BASS.

The budget instructions have improved.

The availability of the BASS system and the version reporting systems within the BASS system. Another improvement is the submission of fiscal notes via electronic mail.

They have given assistance in developing the supplemental budget.

They've actually gotten better at providing financial information about the budget proposals.

Just the advice and assistance they give us in preparing budgets and helping us keep track. That is, keeping our figures in the right categories and helping to keep the budget straight.

Mostly by providing immediate budget information and secondly their services to small agencies.

I think the new budget development system looks good, although it hasn't been flight-tested yet. It looks like it should be an asset.

Q22 (cont.) What one or two things, if any, has OFM done over the past two years that have been of help to you or your organization?

The new Budget Analyst. When they tried to sit down and learn about the agency, it enhanced communications.

The Small Agency accounting has taken over our budgeting and has done just a great job. We have a full time accountant that left and they stepped in doing a better job and costing us must less.

The new BASS system has been helpful in doing allotments and decision packages.

They have been helpful in the development of the new budget system.

Up-dating the budget system, internally, and I know that there has been a lot of work with OFM on this.

Probably our Budget Analyst and her technical assistance, because although we are not general-funded we do have questions that require her help.

They changed some of the budget process and made it a little easier for us to make our budget submittals. They have made monitoring requirements much easier also.

The budget workshops have been helpful.

Other Executive Level Questions

Forecasting methods/formats

Their responsiveness on growth projections. They have always been friendly.

Growth Management Population projections have improved. They provided us some documentation and that improved how we look at the numbers. The data didn't improve but the documentation on their methodology improved.

Manuals/written instructions improvements

They have served as a tool to look up policies and procedures.

They were helpful when they re-did SAAM manual and when they implemented FASTRACK.

Putting the procedures and policies online has been a tremendous help. The SAAM manual. That's the administrative manual. It's online now and it wasn't in the past. It's helpful because everyone in my agency can look at it now at their desk. We don't have to hang on to the papers that are sometimes crumbled, old or worn out and pass it around the office. Anyone can access it from their desk and we can bring up the travel reimbursement, which we're concerned about as well. Each of us can do that from our desk.

They have been good at maintaining statewide Policies and Procedures.

1. The reorganization and re-writing of the manual, meaning the procedures manual - financial and administrations manual (SAM) 2. FASTRACK - which is basically two forms online form. There is a CD which is available to each agency.

The electronic fund transfer is helpful. Also, they put the Policy and Procedures manual out on the Web site.

Q22 (cont.) What one or two things, if any, has OFM done over the past two years that have been of help to you or your organization?

1. The SAAM manual being Web-based. 2. The BASS system.

I think one of the best is reorganizing their administrative manual, which they call SAAM (state administrative and accounting manual). They cut out a lot of duplication, tried to put like things together, and generally cut it down some.

They are rewriting their policies and procedures manual to put it in a much easier way to locate things and read them.

They simplified the Accounting manual. It was a major edit that was helpful. I don't know if that was two years or not. The years seem to fade into themselves. It is simplified; they cut down the volume and made it easier to use.

Revising SAAM, the statewide accounting manual. It's easier to read and it is understandable.

They created a new SAAM manual. The new OFM index is helpful. They put their SAAM and a

Other Executive Level Questions

lot of other information on the Internet, which is really helpful for us. They provided some IRS information and training.

The new OFM manual has been very helpful. They restructured it. It's very easy to find things now and it's easier to use.

Putting the OFM manual online.

By redoing the SAAM manual. And they have answered some individual questions I have had, by phone.

Putting the Policies and Procedures online has been one of the most helpful. The travel directive is being written. I have heard good things about this, without seeing it.

When they put their administrative and accounting manual on the Web site.

They have displayed SAAM, the Statewide Administrative Manual. They have displayed it online.

The computerized policies, that's what I used the most. They are easily accessible and up-to-date.

They put the manual online. And I'd just like to say that generally, they give good service and are responsive.

The SAAM manual. It's so much easier to find the policies and it's more accessible. The OFM Internet home page has been a real bonus. It has the Director of Staff, the link to other finances and budget, and the SAAM manual is accessible on it.

They redid the OFM manual the SAAM manual. It's online and easier to access.

We get the Policies and Procedures. We occasionally have to look to see what is needed for the reports we need to send out and that's very helpful. It's easy to look them up using the software instead of crumbled sheets of paper.

Q22 (cont.) What one or two things, if any, has OFM done over the past two years that have been of help to you or your organization?

They have made the information more accessible with regard to the manual and procedures. We don't have to call people. More training had been offered now than before. Technology has helped so much. We can get reports and budget information online, instantly. We used to have to wait for hard copy. Technology has helped so much.

The re-writing of the SAAM manual has been helpful.

First of all, they were helpful by automating the Policies and Procedures manual by putting it online. And the second thing is to use the federal travel rates. So as soon as the Feds change we can change and we don't have to wait on OFM to massage the data.

Other Executive Level Questions

I'm going to go with SAAM, the statewide accounting manual. Getting this product actually delivered made all the difference in the world. And I have a second one. I believe that training, the quality of the training that OFM has offered over the past two years, has improved immensely.

Training/seminars

The statewide vendor system and the offering of classes. The automation of warrant cancellations has been nice.

They have come out to provide training for annexation and they have been very responsive to my calls.

The classes they provide have helped me. The AFRS classes, ordering reports and they have provided us with a direct line to Olympia. It's a dedicated line so we could do AFRS financial. Another is the FASTRACK. It has made it easier to get the financial information. It has fixed it so the report is customized to our needs.

Training classes for the new BASS system.

The classes they held for making us aware of our boundary lines and how to calculate so we didn't miss any people in the census.

We had that training on new travel procedures.

Training that they have offered has been helpful.

In my previous job I had a lot of contact with the Capital Assets Group, and (name) was fantastic in his support of those working with him. The training courses have been extremely well organized, well presented and helpful to me in my new position.

The issue of taxable fringe benefits training that they did in conjunction with IRS. And also the SAAM manual.

They offered a good training program for enumerators.

They have helped with quarterly taxes and offered a class on that.

Their training is great.

Q22 (cont.) What one or two things, if any, has OFM done over the past two years that have been of help to you or your organization?

The training is very, very good and they seem to be on top of that. I have been here nine months.

One, would be face-to-face problem solving which is unique to our agency. Second, would be specific training now that they've started for (customer), which will be unique for our accounting department.

Other Executive Level Questions

Offering more training. More accessible training. It used to be once or twice a year now it's quarterly or monthly.

Training and information in regards to FASTRACK and AFRS.

Lots of training, which is helpful for DSHS. But I, myself, haven't been able to get away and go to it in the last couple years.

They have done briefings to their Budget staff on what we do, and that helped us through the budget process because we are talking the same language. Second, based on understanding our agency better, they fought for and actually obtained line items that we wanted.

One is the institution of training with the IRS. The information in training that could be applied in a practical manner in payroll helped us keep in compliance with Federal and State laws. The second was the development of the reconciliation spread-sheet. All agencies weren't doing the reconciliation sheets in the same manner.

They have offered better training classes.

Number one would be site-specific training, where they come here. Number two would be the FASTRACK technology.

The classes they provide and their personal help on the 941 reporting

They have a new training program.

The training they provide on how to utilize their products is helpful.

They have been arranging appointments to come in and go over how to fill out forms for population or, I should say, give us the formulas we need to do them.

FASTRACK-specific mention

The FASTRACK system is very helpful.

The new FASTRACK system has been really helpful.

By improving management reporting through FASTRACK, and doing budget procedures over the Internet.

Q22 (cont.) What one or two things, if any, has OFM done over the past two years that have been of help to you or your organization?

The FASTRACK made our job much easier. That's number one, and the second is the support we get from AFRS. They incorporated it a year and a half ago. Even though I just moved over to fiscal and have not used it as much as I did in computation, we never had that tool before. In addition to the implementation of it, they are constantly up-grading it.

The improvements in the FASTRACK and AFRS systems and tailoring them to agencies' needs

Other Executive Level Questions

and requests have been helpful.

The FASTRACK budget accounting is helpful.

Again the FASTRACK system, and I see more of an openness and cooperation in helping agencies meet Agency and Governor issues for technology. By that I mean their openness to e-commerce.

FASTRACK. It's provided information more readily and quickly. It has allowed us to track vendors and track by categorizing. It allows us to identify each vendor and how much we're spending on each vendor.

FASTRACK. FASTRACK is a system where we can easily access information for other agencies. They give us access to it so we don't have to ask the agency for data every time we need a financial report.

Developing the FASTRACK. It has help me because it's easier and user-friendly. I can get what I want when I want it.

FASTRACK. It's a quantum leap past AFRS, as for as the AFRS report they use to send out. It's better, quicker and easier to use.

The FASTRACK system. It makes tracking the budget a much more timely task.

FASTRACK.

FASTRACK system is very helpful.

The FASTRACK. Being online makes it easier access to data we need.

FASTRACK development, and we are able to access accounting information online. Also with that we can use the Internet to access that information.

They have the new FASTRACK systems and AFRS reporting system.

FASTRACK and the BASS system.

FASTRACK.

FASTRACK is a big plus. The new Budget Development System.

Instigating the FASTRACK program, that has been major.

Q22 (cont.) What one or two things, if any, has OFM done over the past two years that have been of help to you or your organization?

The FASTRACK system has provided us with information that is not available to everyone, but makes our job easier. Overall, they have updated some systems such as budget information,

Other Executive Level Questions

which is now clearer and helps all agencies.

Implementation of FASTRACK is key factor. It allows employee to track budget better.

FASTRACK. Better access to information. The instructions are better in tying the scorecard to the strategies.

FASTRACK and the performance measures system. It means that everything is more automatic makes it easier and faster.

They now have FASTRACK reporting and the warrant cancellation process.

Obviously, the development of FASTRACK. It helps us because we have a better way of knowing how our spending is going, especially on payment of outstanding bills and making our vendors happy.

They installed the FASTRACK. That was helpful because it made it easier to get access to numbers we need to make current decisions.

They have developed FASTRACK accounting system. It is a better way to track our budget. It has been a major pain because everything is so far behind.

Technically it would be the FASTRACK system, which is a huge plus for us. We need to manage multiple funds. It gives us quicker access to financial information.

Implementing FASTRACK. It is a computerized system so I can get financial data more timely. I can also get information as to changes to policies and procedures.

They have clarified travel policy for local travel. They listened to a lot of comments on FASTRACK and improved it.

They put on a new product for displaying expenditures called FASTRACK and that is probably the number one thing. I am new to state government.

The FASTRACK is really a thing I like. Electronically, they have cut down on the paperwork. Also, the training classes are helpful; I like that.

FASTRACK and better communications. The accessibility of the Budget Analyst is good.

FASTRACK.

Travel system-specific mention

The OFM manual has been helpful, along with the travel regulations.

They have been helpful in travel regulations and in the area of contracting out for consultants.

Other Executive Level Questions

Q22 (cont.) What one or two things, if any, has OFM done over the past two years that have been of help to you or your organization?

Development of a travel voucher system that is coming online. Another would be implementation of reimbursement of travel expenses by electronic funds transfer.

The new automated travel voucher system. We are one of the pilot agencies for that. They updated some of the format of their material which made it easier to use and quicker to get information out.

Census information/training

They have helped me through the housing unit and population report.

They have provided census workshops, which have been helpful.

Development of their Web page and development of BASS.

They are really helpful with our census and estimates. That is important for looking ahead.

By providing yearly census data.

They have been helpful in policy assistance and in context of ambiguities of the Growth Management Act. They were also helpful in planning for implementation of the 2000 census.

They helped us with our census. There were telephone calls we made to them and they made to us so it was helpful in answering technical questions.

Development of new systems/technology

We've been working on an automated license issuance system, of which they have been very supportive. They have been very helpful.

They have done a good job updating the systems.

They have allowed us access to their systems.

Customer Service has done a lot of work. By reducing the work flow, providing systems, and producing new products it has saved time for the customer.

They recently developed a new application that helps us. It is seamless with very little paper work.

The development of systems like the BDS and the Capital Budget System.

They are re-doing the systems. They have really improved and continue to improve communications. They're getting information to us faster now electronically.

Other Executive Level Questions

Population division

Find their population forecasting models quite helpful.

I really haven't used them other than the Population and Forecasting Group.

Q22 (cont.) What one or two things, if any, has OFM done over the past two years that have been of help to you or your organization?

They have been helpful in getting the forecast of population we need. And when you do get an answer, it is authentic.

The only thing really is providing annual population estimates.

They're helpful in verifying our population estimates.

They have been helpful just by providing population numbers and forecasts.

They help with the Economic Trends Reports, Indicators Reports, and the Population Forecasting Updates they do. Even though we take them with a grain of salt, it's a start. They are pretty out of touch as far as our part of the state goes.

The Population and Forecasting Division has been very helpful in coming up with population numbers, and also in getting some budget issues through the Legislature on behalf of the county. The Budget Division has been preparing them for the Legislature. Also I should say that I find their data very reliable, and I have a high level of confidence in it.

Every year we do the population so that is extremely helpful - their information on population is helpful.

They have provided the 20-year forecast for Washington State Population. They called in advance on the preliminary forecasts and called to discuss the assumptions for the population declines.

With the State Population Survey, we have contacts with individual staff on issues rather than specific products.

They help us with data that provides population estimates.

They gave us more time to complete the forms for population estimates.

They are very helpful with the population count. Some of our employees have found their forecasting very helpful in the racial breakdown of the city.

Just in helping me figure my budget revenues, and trying to get an accurate account of the population each year. Also in helping me forecast the budget.

They have provided accurate population forecasts.

Other Executive Level Questions

They are very good at explaining and helping me with the population estimates.

The current population survey has been very helpful.

The population estimating process and, in general, the financial information and analysis have been helpful.

They have given population projections. Just using them in program planning.

Providing the Annual Population Estimate and Annual Population Forecasts.

Q22 (cont.) What one or two things, if any, has OFM done over the past two years that have been of help to you or your organization?

The data on the population. It's useful in forecasting our population and tracking our growth.

Providing population data that is very useful and accurate. The data book is helpful as well.

Personal service contracts

They have provided the Personal Services Guide. It provides a pretty streamlined contract if we wanted to use it.

Publishing the personal contracting rules and regulations. Refinement of the capital plan requirements.

Information on Personal Services Contracts and Budget. I consider this pretty much normal, but we work with them all the time. It is pretty hard to pick out one or two things. I have had very good relations with OFM in the past few years. Accounting has always been good, and Budget is good now.

They have assisted us with Personal Services Contracts. We're able to call and get information, and we appreciate their guidance.

The Personal Services Contracts and budget allotments have been helpful.

Payments/disbursements

To AFRS, the vendor payment process, travel and fringe benefit training.

Technical assistance

They have given us help with completing surveys.

Their technology group was extremely helpful in getting our new computer system set up. They do a very good job, at least the persons I deal with. The working relationship with the Personal Services Contracting Group is excellent.

They've been extremely responsive to questions I've had. They are courteous and pleasant. Customer service has been good, responsive, and accessible.

Other Executive Level Questions

They have helped with personnel advice and to help us better understand policies.

I can only speak for myself, and that would be the technical assistance and population projections. One way is by producing the figures themselves. The other is technical assistance for completing the annual projections for our jurisdiction.

They have been available. The technical data that is assembled has been extremely useful to us for planning purposes. The income data has been useful to us in planning for utility rates.

They have really provided technical support with our controller on closings at the end of the year. Generally, they have been helpful.

Q22 (cont.) What one or two things, if any, has OFM done over the past two years that have been of help to you or your organization?

We have appreciated their technical assistance. Anytime we call they give us answers and they have provided contract training. They've created the FASTRACK program which I use every month to update my numbers.

They visited our agency to assist in the budget development process.

They have helped us work through processes involving technical difficulties.

I would say just their technical support.

The Accounting Division has been very supportive with their technical advice.

They have helped our accountant with technical support.

They have given assistance in determining federal income tax requirements.

Technical assistance from the Accounting Division. What I mean is the help they provide in choosing the correct codes for entry into the statewide accounting system.

Consultants/consulting

Reorganizing the Accounting Consultant staff.

I have a very proactive helpful Budget Officer or whatever they are called. They notify me of things going on. They keep me informed, and they are willing to help. They are responsive, I guess.

OFM Budget meets with the (customer) monthly to go over issues - I think that ongoing consultation is probably one of the most valuable things OFM has done for us.

Statistically it is a critical element for planning, growth, grants, utilities planning, and the statistics that they use have been very accurate. (Name), who runs OFM, has been terrific. Overall OFM is a great organization. I deal with all regulatory agencies in Olympia and OFM is terrific. (Name) is very helpful. I am tickled pink with them.

Other Executive Level Questions

The Small Agency consultants group in particular, (name), who is very resourceful, understanding and really cares. The second thing is I appreciate the frequent information I get from Population and Forecasting although it is still lacking in terms of diversified data. My agency is very dependent on statistics.

We did an annexation, our first annexation in 15 years. They were helpful in that I had never done one, and making sure I had the correct documents and other papers.

Getting input from agencies

They have worked harder to work with the agencies on a personal level. Like we have a lot of systems that are weird, not normal. In other words not all agencies are the same. They are starting to realize the uniqueness of different agencies.

They have actually tried to understand the business we are in and to understand the OFM processes.

Q22 (cont.) What one or two things, if any, has OFM done over the past two years that have been of help to you or your organization?

By contacting us personally to try to explain things.

The leadership has showed strong support for us to achieve our goals. Stuff like supplemental budgets.

They just support our systems.

OFM has supported us in some budget initiatives.

One, the Budget Analyst adopted more of an agency perspective and a cooperative attitude as opposed to "just say no" attitude.

They are very useful in arbitrating between agencies and in pulling together basic information that we need.

They have opened up communications between the agency and the analysts. TAPS has been improved. It is easier to get in and out of. AFRS is more current and timely. They are now run on request. We used to have to wait forever on requests. We are very pleased with them really.

I would say they're trying to become responsive to agencies needs. We are in higher education. For a few years, there wasn't information in OFM in that area, and is getting a little bit better.

They provide a good buffer between us and the other agencies for which we sometimes forecast. They provide a level of technical expertise that we can't get anywhere else.

Intranet/Internet/online information/web page

Just recently they went to electronic forms for purchasing things from state agencies' central stores. This cut down on paperwork quite a bit as well as cutting down on the cost and time for

Other Executive Level Questions

paperwork. It is a good system. It saves taxpayers a lot of money.

Their use of electronic mail has been an improvement. Previously we would have to depend on personal information or do telephone tag. With e-mail you can reply immediately. They also are making a conscious effort to be customer-oriented.

Going online, so we have the most current information has been very helpful.

Again, it's the best product we've got. As far as what I do, it is the fact that the data book is available electronically. They have all kinds of terrific reports online. A good portion of my job is responding to a number of inquiries that come over on the Web site and I use it a lot. They have piles and piles of really great information on the Web site. That's the one thing they put out that really impresses me and I use it constantly.

They put the manual online, and I may be anticipatory here but I understand the Travel Voucher System is just about to get up and running, so I'd say that is another one.

The Web site. Having the statistics available online has reduced my contact with the agency because it's all right there.

Q22 (cont.) What one or two things, if any, has OFM done over the past two years that have been of help to you or your organization?

The Policies and Procedures that they've placed on the Internet have been very helpful. Information is easier to access. We don't have to get those pieces of paper anymore or pass them around.

The format; the way the information is presented and is electronically accessible.

Revising the guide on personal service contracting. This helped provide clarification on the invoice payment process. Providing information on the Internet has been helpful.

One, is that they are keeping us current. Two, is they are giving us a link to a Web site to keep us with timely information. We work with a wonderful group of people. They have used e-mail to keep us current. They send us email while we're in sessions or meetings. So now we have information as we're doing business, workshops, sessions, or meetings. We get it as it happens and that's been helpful.

The SAAM manual on the Internet. It's out there and you know that the procedures and policies are up-to-date. The layout is really nice.

Moving the systems out to the Internet systems has been a good help. The FASTRACK system allows us to pull information in the way we want to pull it, especially in ad-hoc reports.

They made things more available through the computers like e-mail and Internet accessibility. This has been very helpful especially since I'm in Seattle and they're in Olympia. It really helps a lot.

Other Executive Level Questions

They've simplified the budget process. They put their policies and procedures online so they are updated more easily. And they have familiarized themselves more with our agency's issues so that they can be more helpful to us

They improved their Web site by adding information we need in financial areas.

They're starting to work with the Internet and Intranet system and FASTRACK. It helps me by getting the forms from the Internet rather than walking over to get them.

The newer Web-based systems available to agencies. We are pleased that agencies do not have to develop their own Web-based applications.

Putting the State Accounting and Administrative Manual on the Internet.

They have put their policies and information on the Web, including newsletters, executive orders and similar stuff.

Timely. Due to their online products we now have electronic access. Secondly, we now have fewer two-day suspenses.

They made more information accessible through the Internet, which is very convenient. Generally, overall, I have not received any bad service from OFM. Overall they are very courteous.

OFM has finalized some Internet applications. The Policies and Procedures are helpful. I like their accessibility over the Internet.

Q22 (cont.) What one or two things, if any, has OFM done over the past two years that have been of help to you or your organization?

They have given me the most current numbers that are not necessarily on their Web page. The Web page usually goes to April of the previous year. When I call, they go back to November of that year.

They put their Policies and Procedures online.

They have been helpful by using an Internet-based system for sharing information.

Internet communication: email and the Web have been a big help.

They are responsive and more into customer service and the embracement of the Internet.

They've put almost everything on the Web that's of help. By putting things like the manuals, budget manuals, policies and procedure on the Web it has made things easier to access.

They have worked with us extensively on e-commerce and the utilization of credit cards. They have worked with us in helping communicate our budget concerns to the Legislature. They have taken time to understand the agency's strategic concerns, which makes it easier for them to

Other Executive Level Questions

understand our concerns and to communicate our budget to the Legislature.

Moving their products to the Web has been the biggest improvement.

I really like their Web site. People seem to be more accessible than in the past.

Generally, we like the frequent communications via e-mail. Although I have not used it, the movement that they're going toward is a Web-based system. Yes some of that has started but its not completed as yet.

They put data on the Web site that we can download.

They put the travel regulations on the Internet for easy access and constant updating.

They have developed online access to information.

The use of the Internet for budget information i.e., Winsums, are available on the Internet and funds and accounts manuals that are available on the Internet.

They made the system more user-friendly. It used to be a pain to go and correct an error, and now it isn't. We are also able to look up things online.

By putting their manuals and other information on the Web. We now have better access to current information. Because of that it makes it easier to get updates.

Easy to access information on the Internet.

The posting of Policies and Procedures online was a really good thing. Indirectly, we have State Board and the Center for Information Services that deal more directly with OFM and pass along the instructions and information to us.

Q22 (cont.) What one or two things, if any, has OFM done over the past two years that have been of help to you or your organization?

I really do appreciate their Internet information; that's very helpful.

They bring information on their Web site and distribute information on their e-mail.

The main thing is putting online the OFM manual, the Policies and Procedures.

Change is being noticed/appreciated for soliciting feedback/Policy manual upgrade good using multiple channels of communication

I think they've improved the information we receive. Reports and budget instructions are more accurate, easier to read, and easier to understand.

There are improved communications. They have put a lot of information on the Web, so there is easier accessing of information.

Other Executive Level Questions

The updating of the Policies and Procedures. They took out some of the funny language, but it still could use cleanup. You can't get around some of the legal technical language even if you try.

Both the change in attitude of the office to be more customer service-oriented and their revising the budget system have been great.

There has been a change in attitude and working with the customer.

There has been improvement in customer service overall. The overall direction has been more focused towards the customer.

The improved contact and the improved customer service have helped. It was never bad, but it is better now. They have done a good job at reaching out, soliciting ideas and comments on revising the fiscal note process.

OFM's staff continues to be helpful, honest and they attempt to do the best job they can with the information they are given.

They have been improving communications between agencies with e-mail and data systems.

There's a lot of work they are doing that will someday be very useful. They have been sending out the minutes from their meetings and they are more open. That's a plus.

They've become much more customer-friendly. Just in the general way they do business. In times past they told us what to do. They still do that, but now our needs are considered in the decisions that are made.

There has been improvement in the quality of people we are working with, specifically the Budget Analyst for DOT, they are accessible and knowledgeable and I give them very high marks for this.

The change in attitude from the Budget Analyst, more customer service-oriented. The former analyst was a micro-manager. We are learning what we can do and how they can support us. Secondly, the availability around the Y2K issues. We had separate concerns but we got a couple of critical things resolved.

Q22 (cont.) What one or two things, if any, has OFM done over the past two years that have been of help to you or your organization?

The OFM is now listening. They are more receptive. It used to be that they closed the door. Now they try to see what they can do. They work in a nicer way. They should listen to agencies that propose or make recommendations, but the problem can be the Legislature in regulations. I am more impressed with their staff. They are more congenial, responsive to questions, and I would like to praise the staff of OFM.

Accessibility to some of their staff in asking questions has gotten better in most cases.

OFM made some changes; redesigned the Policies and Procedures manual, so it's been rewritten.

Other Executive Level Questions

It's easier access to information.

***The Ear*/other publications**

The publication *The Ear*, I like that. Well it provides additional information and insight in terms of what will be impacting the budget and where the Governor's going. It provides some view of the Legislature. It provides some view of early changes on or in policies on a statewide basis.

Their publications. One, *The Ear*, and the other one is called *The Connection*. In addition, they've got a single audit currently in development. They keep me better informed as to what's going on with them and with the federal level.

I think that the newsletter *The Ear* goes a long way to providing information that we need. It is a real plus.

Vision, leadership, forward thinking

They share their information. Especially in the budget area, more than anything. They've also made progress, albeit very slow, in moving away from the mainframe-based archaic system. Though I question their management's prioritization list on what gets transferred over.

We have a budget coordinator analyst who listens to us and works hand in hand with us. But before, everything was dictated to us.

What has been a large help are two different things. One is that for capital funding we had a project that was running short and they came to our aid. The other thing is we are applying for a major capital request to build a building. Their staff has provided clear instruction on the process we need to go through to get this project put together.

Agency management with OFM is very customer-friendly. (Two identified budget sections) have improved. The leadership in OFM has improved in integrating the agencies. Integrating, in response to the Y2K problem, and the electronic commerce.

Nothing in particular/don't know

I haven't used them.

Nothing.

Q22 (cont.) What one or two things, if any, has OFM done over the past two years that have been of help to you or your organization?

Nothing - our only contact with them is we do the annual report of estimated population, and we do that by mail. But about a year ago I made a mistake on it and a woman at their office called me. We talked about it and that's the only contact I ever had with them. When you called, I didn't even know who OFM was, and I'm still just kind of assuming that this is the group we do the population estimate for. When we get their materials we normally don't even look at them. We're so small we don't even issue permits.

Other Executive Level Questions

Nothing that I know of.

Nothing that I can recall.

Nothing.

Refused

I can't answer that because right now I have contact with them. But this is a temporary assignment for me now. Later I'll go back to my regular job here and OFM will not be a contact point for me.

Q23 If OFM could make ONE change that would make their products and services better, what would it be?

Nothing/no changes needed

Can't think of anything.

Nothing to add. They have improved so much it has been great.

Can't think of anything.

It is a good relationship and they do a good job.

Can't think of anything.

Works really good - wouldn't make any changes.

Customer service orientation/more, better, different

Development of systems that support the unique needs of different agencies.

Ask their customers more what they need. They've already made improvement there but they still have a ways to go.

More honesty. That is, talk about what you really do. Partly in terms of budget decisions. Plus, all of the quality and accountability efforts. They act like these are important and they make people fill out a lot of paper work but they are not important and they are not used.

I would hope that they would treat dedicated funds to agencies different than general funds to agencies.

Q23 (cont.) If OFM could make ONE change that would make their products and services better, what would it be?

For those who are OFM-challenged, an executive summary, the overview, and the big picture. Then you can go in and get the details.

Help us to improve our services to the public. Less regulation, more service-oriented.

Other Executive Level Questions

There has to be a self-realization with OFM that they should be as customer oriented as any business should be.

They would be nicer and more customer-friendly. They are not very approachable.

To seek better understanding of operational departmental problems. OFM is driven by one thing and one thing only: the Governor's policies and that's okay. That's who hires them. But a departmental crises doesn't really matter to them. They march to the drum of their master and leader. Their only concern is the Governor's priorities and not their customers' needs, satisfaction, or help with the customer needs, as this survey tries to say that they're doing. I did the same survey last year. I believe with the same questions. I want to know, why do it if they're not truly seeking to understand customers.

My one observation, OFM does not give me the sense that I am the customer. It is more a case of forcing policy rather than helping us achieve our goals and mission. They may have gotten new personnel in the last 6 months.

More thorough customer involvement and development of systems.

Continue with the customer orientation.

More upfront work with customers before designing new systems.

Promote/explain products and services

A little more explanation. Explain what they are talking about for easier interpretation. Too often accountants and budget people talk accountant and budget language and not English.

Let us know what they are. Aside from filling out the survey we don't know what they do. They may be fabulous and wonderful but I have no idea what they do or who they are. I would like to know and why they are so important and how are we connected to that importance.

For me, it would be a more comprehensive catalog of what they can provide to planning departments, and also if they could have a regional contact person, like a staff planner assigned to our county who would be a standard point of contact for me and OFM. I think they would be wise to look at the model that Municipal Research Services Center (MRSC) has developed.

Stop being the secret service Even on a daily basis, a lot of people see OFM as secretive, but they impact our lives. To identify their mission, roles, and responsibilities. Too often it feels like it is our responsibility, and not theirs. Make quicker decisions.

Q23 (cont.) If OFM could make ONE change that would make their products and services better, what would it be?

Communication improved internally, e.g., between upper management and analysts or between budget and accounting/solicit input

I would like to see budget and accounting talk to each other and be on the same page including communicating with the agencies.

Other Executive Level Questions

Coordinate the budget division with accounting services as far as the customer contacts. If they know what one another did they would be better informed. If there was some way that the accounting service knows about budgeting and budgeting knows accounting, all in respect to the customer contact.

Occasionally I have difficulty getting through. There are just a few contacts that we work with and one of them is very hard to reach. Maybe they could put another person with him.

Continue to do what they have started to do which is to better understand agencies, their funding, and the programs they manage.

Continue to improve the two-way communications.

Increase integration and coordination between the policy and budget offices.

Allowing us to use our internal financial data rather than use their browser based data. We want to input data from our systems, rather than to input data to their browser based system.

On the budget side, they could change by helping manage time-lines with the agencies better. They should know what I mean but I'll give you an example. Suppose allotments are due on the 25th of the month and we don't have the information to do it until the 23rd of the month. That's why I gave them a low rating.

Commit to helping agencies succeed, not just OFM agencies internal commitment to helping agencies internal processes succeed. Not just OFM internal processes.

Better internal communication within the budget side. Decisions that are made at the executive level need to filter down to the analyst level.

It is the change that we have been seeing - to communicate more fully and openly with the agencies. The problem with OFM is that there can be arbitrary rulings from OFM when there hasn't been adequate communication about the changes.

Communication. Improve communication with other agencies. Keep other agencies informed on what we need to know related to budget, etc.

To enhance communication lines.

Closer integration of the policy functions with the budget functions because they seem to operate as separate functions. I have a comment-you asked me a question about the financial services responsiveness and I'd like to say that my biggest concern is that it revolves around the facility information system which I think is antiquated and the system is not responsive.

Q23 (cont.) If OFM could make ONE change that would make their products and services better, what would it be?

I guess having their budget and accounting people talk to each other or communicate with each other better.

Other Executive Level Questions

Communication improved externally - we're all one team approach with clients/phone calls answered by a person, not automated, etc.

I think basically what they are doing now - contacting their users so that they can make it better for their users - pretty much what they are doing now.

To continue to improve on how they disseminate information from their agency: e-mails, newsletters and other communications. *The Ear* is very useful. One group puts it out. Something like this would be helpful.

The notion that it would be great to choose our one financial consultant or have or provide input into who the financial consultant would be. Right now we have a problem with the one we have as far as working together and so on but if we could have some input and have someone that would actually be a resource to us.

Communications area. More forthcoming on areas where statewide priorities are going to supercede agencies' priorities. Clarify whether money exists or if priorities are consistent.

I guess being more available. People being more available instead of answering machines.

Their policy people need to have a better understanding of what the agencies are doing. My area is engineering and transportation. They know the policies and the political aspects of where the Governor wants to go but they don't see where the county needs to be. There's a disconnect somewhere. Basically, all their staff is accounting people. None come from the government so they don't come with a more functional background.

Provide information that is updated, accurate, consistent, usable (user-friendly), with background detail

With their AFRS system, allow easier ad hoc reporting capabilities such as the ability to search under different programs, objects, subjects, time periods, etc.

The biggest change would be up-dating all their financial reporting computing systems. AFRS needs to be fixed. That would make a tremendous difference to each agency. Fixed means more accessible. Put information in but hard to get out, need flexibility, Windows based. All mainframe programs - includes, TAPS, APS, CAMs. Need manuals on the Internet to access them, so we don't have to take the manuals around, and wonder about if they are up-to-date. If they are on the Internet OFM needs to do some PR to make it known.

I have been disputing with them the number of recreational vehicles in town that are being lived in and they are relying on information that is 10 years old. They need to clarify the reports on the group home numbers because I don't believe they are accurate. The residential family homes are accurate but I question some of the other reports like mobile homes and people living in RVs.

More options for agencies to get more detailed data out of the systems for their operations.

Other Executive Level Questions

Q23 (cont.) If OFM could make ONE change that would make their products and services better, what would it be?

More details, information.

Just be more in depth with the information, especially in regard to accounting policies, such as OMB circulars and GASB regulations.

More user-friendly to the non-financial groups. They are getting better though.

More up-to-the-minute data availability.

Reports. Use a more user-friendly type way of reading reports.

Make the computer system more user-friendly.

The one change of a high priority is the Solomon accounting system is not user-friendly as it relates to how we have to use it.

What's really bad about them is their updates. They should improve. They seem to have neglected their regular publications. They no longer come out on time nor have they been revised. The chart book was useful but late in revisions. The budget process hasn't been revised but it's useful for the state government needs. We're not with the state so it's bad for us having outdated and late updates.

Make it more understandable.

The timeliness of the changes that they implement. They seem to introduce things a little late in the process. Where technology is today, I think we are like 8 to 10 years behind the curve.

They should look at the transaction code they use; like at the end of a biennium, if we want to carry something over to the next biennium, we can't use x batch, you have to enter everything twice, reenter it all by hand in month 25. They should warn people upfront whether you can or can't use x batch, and it would be much more efficient if you could.

More user-friendly products for the laypersons on the financial and statistical information.

More timely and clear instructions.

More of what they are doing. More user-friendly stuff. They are doing good but they still have a long ways to go.

Their AFRS reports. They are difficult for our field people to understand because they are not accountants. So, more user-friendly AFRS reports sums it up, I guess.

Improve the indexes on their Web pages with more detail, list more things that I might need to look up.

Other Executive Level Questions

They could change some of the products they put out like some of the old mainframe ones. BPS and the APS. They could update it to a Windows application, more user-friendly.

Continue with their innovations as far as getting information out there.

Q23 (cont.) If OFM could make ONE change that would make their products and services better, what would it be?

Timely responses

Maybe more timely changes in policies and procedures.

They could have our travel voucher requests back to us in 24 hours instead of 3-4 days lag time.

Getting information out in a timely manner.

Brevity! Brevity is it, man. If every agency could know their balances in a 72 hr period we would be in heaven. No one knows their balance. People come in here with all these spreadsheets with all these numbers with plusses and minuses and they say how's your budget? I'm like, are you trying to impress me? I just glaze over with that stuff. No one knows what it means. Brevity and clarity, please.

Responding more quickly to agency requests.

Respond to requests more timely.

A faster budget response. Get the budgets back to the agencies in a more timely fashion.

Aside from the other types of estimates, which I already mentioned, by urban growth area and by census block, the only other thing would be more timely provision of estimates.

We don't get firm yes's or no's in a timely manner. So, we need to come to resolution quicker. In an effort to be kinder and gentler, don't drag it out cause you don't want to tell us "no" outright.

Well I think it's the nature of the work that we do and it's not a criticism of OFM, but when their responsiveness diminishes, if there was one thing, it would be really nice if they could get things moving faster.

Quicker response time.

A little quicker on some answers in regard to forecasting.

A little more timely information with their data. Have the data available sooner.

Realistic timeframes for workflow/give sufficient notice when request info from agencies

Getting more input from agencies before putting out a final product.

Other Executive Level Questions

To ensure when they request information that they have really given it the once over and to make sure the information is absolutely relevant because it is time consuming.

It seems like we're very slow at seeing where we're at in our budget, so if OFM could figure out how to let us know what we need to do to improve our awareness of our own situation, that would be good.

Q23 (cont.) If OFM could make ONE change that would make their products and services better, what would it be?

Computer systems/software, flexible, less trans. Oriented, CAMS, winsum, develop new accounting models that interact

Increase flexibility on their accounting system, the computer systems. Allowing the agency to tailor their systems more to their needs.

If they can get all of their software systems operating in a consistent platform, that would be terrific.

More electronic purchasing options from vendors. I've heard they're working on it.

Making sure the system updates nightly as it is supposed to. Sometimes it doesn't do what it is supposed.

Automatic notification by e-mail of changes in mileage reimbursements and that sort of thing, so that I don't have to go look it up each time to see what is current.

Electronic forms would be nice.

Get a little more efficient in data collection. Maybe offer an e-mail submission option for population estimates in the city and send fewer reminder notices.

They have a nice brochure on their activities, *The Ear*. It would be better if they e-mailed it to me then I could forward it to my state board members.

They're working toward it but to get an interface between Accounting and Budgeting so we won't have to re-key things in.

Use the Internet more

Internet access. I know agency information is available but I would like to have actual data: social, economic, and demographic.

Web-based system.

Listing their data on the Internet would be very helpful to the cities. They may already do it, and it would be very convenient.

Make more information available by Internet.

Other Executive Level Questions

PC interface for the allotment preparation system.

Availability on the Internet.

Continue redeveloping the older computer systems, such as the BPS 1 and APS. The BPS and APS were both redeveloped this past year but they're still in the 20th century, mainly still in the 1970s. What I'm saying is keep updating them and make them Internet-based and more user-friendly, especially APS, it's a dinosaur.

I'd like an expanded Frequently Asked Questions on their Web site regarding travel. I don't think they have one.

Q23 (cont.) If OFM could make ONE change that would make their products and services better, what would it be?

Making more stuff available on the Web site. Stuff like general information, social demographic and economic data. Any information or surveys on other cities in the state.

Have everything go through the Internet and Web page because we're outside of Olympia and we go through the public mail. If they used the Internet more it would make my job a lot easier because I can access information right there.

A better computerized system that would roll up better between OFM and the colleges. That would be great.

Make their Web site a little easier to read.

Make it even more interactive through computers.

Finding information on the Internet for state agencies. Making it easier to find. I waste a lot of time looking for what I'm wanting, but when I get there it is good. We need indexing and search programs.

Replace APS with Web-based technologies.

Notification of their Web page changes. Electronic notification of the changes and to have continued communication about changes, more interaction.

Policy directives-easy to understand, simplicity, customer involvement, more timely policy and procedures

To see their role differently. To see themselves as the comptroller - it would change their approach to certain things. OFM should try to get common systems, policies and common accounting approaches for the agencies rather than leaving all those choices to the individual agencies.

Continue to make policies and procedures more clear.

I think it would be to work on the underlying policies around fiscal notes. They are going

Other Executive Level Questions

through a process of improvement right now to support the preparation of the notes, but they aren't dealing with some of the systemic problems with fiscal notes. I think a commonly held feeling is they don't need to ask, probably, for as many notes as they do. They could cut down on the number of notes they request from agencies and still serve the Legislature responsively.

More training for policies and procedures.

Provide more detail in the policies and procedures manuals.

To simplify their manuals on policies and procedures.

Accounting-more staff, better trained

There are some individuals in the accounting division that would be better off retiring - they are just tired.

Q23 (cont.) If OFM could make ONE change that would make their products and services better, what would it be?

Get somebody to help. Have somebody understand our account better and have someone that's able to see the big picture and apply it to the needs of what OFM requires. For example, we get a specialist who doesn't get a whole or entire picture. We have an analyst assigned but an account they can't figure out because we can't either and they change our budget so they tend to ignore us.

Accounting-address Federal Contracts and Grants in contractual terms, provide better payroll support

A more flexible accounts payable system.

More customized accounting reports, which they are working on, but that would be the best. The accounting reports should be designed for each agency.

Make it easier to track expenditures, the accounting part of it.

Their accounts receivable system, they did some changes to it but I am not satisfied with the result. It requires too many steps to post accounts receivable data. Simplify it!

Allowing flexibility in the statewide accounting systems for either agency optional fields within their system or a plan to get like a master financial plan to get agency-specific systems and needs incorporated there so we aren't running on two different circles and paths and going the wrong direction from each other.

AFRS is inadequate for agencies that are heavily federally funded. The labor distribution/cost allocation modules are just useless. Many of us have our own accounting systems, and as long as that's the case, they don't make new accounting modules generic enough to be useful for agencies that have, and have to have, their own systems. The improvements should be made more easily integratable with non-AFRS systems.

Other Executive Level Questions

The wording of their questions in their survey. Some of it I don't understand what they are driving at. Asking questions where people live and what not.

A clearer user-friendly format for the information. Most of us out here are not accountants and we find it difficult reading through and gathering the data.

Significantly streamline and reduce their accounting related regulations to focus on the most important protections as opposed to protecting everything.

Have it so we could have an electronic accessibility to payroll information.

Their accounting system - AFRS is antiquated and needs to be improved.

Budget-more staff, able to respond, become familiar with agency; simplify budget process

To train their consulting staff more in specific needs of the agencies they work with.

To hire more budget and accounting consultants and systems development people. They're understaffed. They can't do it all.

Q23 (cont.) If OFM could make ONE change that would make their products and services better, what would it be?

There was one staff member that just let something sit. It was just one of those things that was overlooked and it really caused a delay for us. Other than that, fine.

They should stop making the budget process burdensome. Move away from so much detail on management related issues.

The budget division needs to be more fair with small agencies. They all assume that we are a large agency when we are actually very small. For example, we get our funding as if we could handle large changes, but even small changes affect us disproportionately. Be fairer with staffing needs at smaller agencies.

Clone <name> and <name> - they are very knowledgeable and I don't know what we will do when they leave.

I'm disappointed they don't have an architect in their capital development section. Hire one.

They need to somehow get longevity for their budget folks. They burn out so quick, really quickly, and I can understand it, but I've had like four or five different budget analysts in the past year.

They keep changing our Budget Analyst and they stay less than a year. They never get to know our agency. We need stability in the analyst assigned to us.

Hire more confident budget personnel, people that are more willing to come out and get to know the programs better.

Other Executive Level Questions

Come up with one budget system and stick to it. I mean for online.

Help desk-more staff, etc.

Taking a leadership role so that we get more competent fiscal people in state agencies, right now the competence is all over the map from jokers to really good people.

Have more staff, more analysts. I think they are spread so thin. There are not enough analysts to meet our needs or help or receive the information we need.

Increase personnel.

Keep their people. They've had too much employee turnover.

To slow down the turnover that the agency has been experiencing for the past several years.

Hire more competent people.

Provide adequate staffing to accomplish the workload – they're very overworked.

More personnel. A quicker turnaround to answer questions, solve problems, etc. A faster response time.

I think they just need more of them. They're spread too thin to do all the things they could do, it's a resource issue; they need more resources and more people to ensure we get good programs, good policies.

Q23 (cont.) If OFM could make ONE change that would make their products and services better, what would it be?

Adequate staff so they could come down and spend more time with us.

Hire more staff. Their staff handles some many tasks that they are spread pretty thin and are pretty frantic.

To make themselves more available because I don't know who the groups are. They should publish a list.

More staff, so they are available.

More accessibility. Sometimes I have a hard time getting a hold of them. Maybe they're spread too thin.

Forecasting-accurate census in 2000, less confusing forms, add some health insurance info, politics and economics, be sensitive to local data to OFM

More information on population estimates and forecasts available off the Web. We had to do a bunch of spreadsheets. If the information is there, please publicize its availability more.

Other Executive Level Questions

More supplemental or beefed up demographic data.

Maybe make it a little easier to use the population survey results they have out on the Internet.

Communication. Translating legislative or government goals and the rules and regulations that are required of agencies.

Make their population estimates form easier to work with calculations. The way it is broken out, it could be in a better format.

To provide accurate population figures to cities. We depend on this for per capita funds.

When they provide census information that they give to us in March they give us multipliers to use. After we turn in our survey they use different multipliers in May. Those multipliers that they use in May were not done by us but by an outside contracting group. They use the answers for their May results that they use in May are not correct and do not match our work. So first they used a different group, second they didn't get or receive the right multipliers. We put a lot of work and effort, time into getting them and they do not use our work we have done in March. It's very frustrating so change that!

Continue improving future population projections. Continue to enrich the data.

Giving us the population size within our jurisdiction.

When they release their forecasting numbers, we don't always get the data books, so better follow-up and presentation on that forecasting information, possibly even a breakdown by county and cities within the county. We get it eventually but it would be nice if it were better followed up when it came out.

Q23 (cont.) If OFM could make ONE change that would make their products and services better, what would it be?

Personal Services Contracting-need things quickly and some that OFM system cannot provide, more friendly

The Personal Service Guide. They could try to give us some examples. All examples can't fit into every situation so in the grayish area that may be perceived by two different individuals or maybe the frequently ask questions could have several examples.

Represent social service benefits to legislative staff.

Manual/written instructions-OFM manual more readable, clear, better indices

Their manuals need to be improved with greater detail, more examples, and easier to read and follow.

Make their manuals more readable and understandable. They try but just haven't gotten there. Use less jargon and more plain language.

Other Executive Level Questions

I use so little. It would be useful to continue to produce the OFM manual on paper and not just rely on the Web site. We have to print sections of it, as needed.

Just make more readily available hard copies of reports, etc. You know, the data book, population trends books, all the data and trend books.

Complete their policy manual for items not addressed in their current manual. Items such as value engineering, the constructive reviews, and determining project management fee for preparing design, etc.

To make things better would be to provide a complete index in the budget manuals. The manuals are very difficult. It's very hard to look up or find things without an index.

The manuals could be less wordy. On the manuals there's too much paper work. Somebody likes to write those manuals.

OFM manual. It's not easy to use; it's difficult to find information. I don't know what they can do about that, it's about two volumes and many pages. I wish it was easier to use and I don't know if they can fix it by making the manual easier to use. Finding information, understanding the information, knowing where to go for references. Maybe they could improve the manual with constant training on using the manual.

They need to start sending out the book again. It is a little hard finding the page on the Web

Making their policy manual more readable.

Better manuals for their systems. Better documentation maybe with more examples.

Keep a history file of their OFM manual online. They change travel rules and regulations every six months and when we're audited, we're dealing with an old manual.

Make things easier to read in a real understandable language. Doesn't read very well, sometimes too technical, hard to interpret exactly what they're saying.

Q23 (cont.) If OFM could make ONE change that would make their products and services better, what would it be?

One specific thing is the travel portion of the manual. There are still parts of it that are confusing. They get a little too detailed in some areas and it creates confusion.

I would like to see their policies and procedures go into a little more detail. I know they cut down a whole bunch of detail in recent years but there are a lot of things that we need to know and to know where to look for them.

To have more one-on-one support, i.e., a hotline. Redesign the manual system so it would be easier to navigate. More electronic forms or have forms in one place where you could look for them.

Other Executive Level Questions

Training-geographic accessibility, more specific (e.g., AFRS)

Provide more training on their products.

In their training, and maybe they offer it and we just don't take advantage of it, make training available to incoming financial people on the state's regulations.

More training. Like improving the AFRS system in a way that when we want more specific reports we now have specific steps to do to get the reports needed. Improving them so we can skip the steps and get the reports we need.

The only problem I have is I haven't had the time to learn their systems better. So, they could train us more on how to use the system. I can take my time and do it but that takes a long time.

I've dealt with their BASS system, and it seems it either has a lot of problems associated with it, or it's very hard to use and we could use more training with it.

Improve their teaching style in their training. They have some really good teachers and some are boring; it's hard to learn the guidelines for the teachers they have.

Well I've said it already but I would like to repeat it again. I would like them to have an electronic way of making the training more accessible by using some other format rather than traveling all over the state at inconvenient times saving cost and hours.

Maybe have their workshops closer to (city in Eastern WA).

Training in more areas of accounting when there are new policies. We tend not to get that information fast or timely. It tends to be way after the fact. We need training on these changes.

More training for me and my staff to understand their products and how to use them.

They could do more training with more classes so you don't have to wait as long. I can use them for no cost so I prefer their training. They breeze through some of the material pretty fast. I prefer more in-depth and some things done in one day - like general accounting principles class could be longer. A lot of agencies don't train well, and people need more training and more in-depth. They are about the only place we can go, even though training is not what they are about. The training is my main contact for me. My supervisor will call with questions and OFM is very helpful. AFRS-Oracle.

Q23 (cont.) If OFM could make ONE change that would make their products and services better, what would it be?

I think with some staff people, some better customer service training. There's some unevenness that additional training could probably correct. Also, I'm not aware of all the other divisions in OFM. Maybe they could let local governments know more about the other divisions and services OFM provides.

More training and information on what they do and how they can help us do our job.

Other Executive Level Questions

Stop canceling the courses.

More in-depth training. Right now it is very condensed. Getting down to the nitty-gritty of detail - that is what accountants are for.

Make training opportunities for budget and accounting accessible to managers in the field. I'm thinking about general accounting processes, basic learning tools.

A little better training of their programs of our personnel.

Interactive training on the Web site. It is hard to get to a training meeting when you wear several hats in an agency. Maybe on a CD or disk.

Reporting-improve format; simplify; on demand; easier to read

If they could make the use of the BDS more accessible, useful, and less prone to errors, it would be helpful. The BDS deals with the personnel costs of each person, which is critical for budgeting. It is screwed up and out of date, but it is all we have. It is in hard copy form only and we need it in electronic form, either in Excel form or in a format that we could use would be better. It would be helpful if it were in a form that could be automatically up-dated. It is hard with different start dates and different program funding for each person. AFRS is 2 weeks behind in objects a, b, and t, and needs accruals.

Personally, many of the systems are relatively hard to understand in terms of content. That's because I am not a financial person.

Developing a practice set concept with modules in it for accounts payable, and so forth. Similar to the college level brought in to the state training of accountants and let them take it home and have it graded. It could be on the Web-based or done in a number of different ways so they can learn it.

For us, to make the statewide data more accessible from statewide accounting data. Summarized by agency and by fund source and appropriations.

To be like the consultants, to be more knowledgeable. They often respond at too high a level - we need an answer that is more at our level.

Encourage them to increase the use of technology instead of having annual conferences. Use contact through e-mail or other electronic services.

Q23 (cont.) If OFM could make ONE change that would make their products and services better, what would it be?

Reduce the detail of reporting. We have to report our accounting stuff; it's in detail level. The frequency also, like we have to report every month and the budget, too. It's not realistic or useful because we have it internally anyway. It doesn't make sense to do it each year. We get the same amount of money anyway so it's a duplicate but the state wants it in on a form that they send out along with a monthly report. Too much reporting.

Other Executive Level Questions

Everything they have is online but they continue to send out paper copies. They should survey to see who needs paper copies - it would save a lot of paper. For people who are not as computer literate, show them how to access and get to the subject they need. Some people may shy away because it takes too much time to access electronically.

Some of their systems should be made more flexible for individual agencies' needs. AFRS system in particular allows very little flexibility in allocations; only allows modifications once or twice a year, which is totally useless.

Have a summary reporting into the accounting system rather than detailed reporting.

To improve their format of their data that they put out. When its comes to budget, it is hard to read as a layman its hard to read receipts, allocations, allotments, and so forth.

Simplify information. They send me a lot of information and it needs to be simplified, (language)

If they're able to format a report that will provide financial data by invoice. In other words, it would list all the invoices we made by an accounting code listing them by monthly for the year and so on.

Automate the AFRS system such that the reports that agencies receive can be transmitted electronically.

More understanding/support/knowledge of agencies/programs and their unique needs

They could be less involved with being mandated. The reason that they are all about rules and regulation is because that's the way the Legislature wants them. It would be nice to have somebody more involved with helping us do things than in mandating us to do them.

They need to understand higher education better. They need to realize it's a big part of the state yet different from other state agencies. Better understanding of the business end. The budgeting and accounting and how they differ from a regular state agency.

It would be nice to have the budget instructions before our Board of Trustees have already approved our budget request initiatives. Recognize that the Higher Education calendar is September to May.

To work on the legislative changes to make it less restrictive for community colleges and higher education and raise their limits from \$5k to \$10k for filing. We have lot of student and unique requirements and those aren't taken into account in the filings. They are very hard to bid with specifying the unique factors. The way the economy is, it is difficult to get a person to agree to what the state can pay, let alone bid it, especially when talking about educational needs.

Specific Policies & Procedures for higher education institutions.

Other Executive Level Questions

Q23 (cont.) If OFM could make ONE change that would make their products and services better, what would it be?

Simplify forms and paperwork

Simplify the budget submittal process.

Consider short survey. The questions: pare it down, it seems like some are repetitive.

Simplifying some of their forms and the directions in filling them out.

Less paper would be helpful. It's hard to sort travel guidelines, agreements, RCWs. Offering training is good. I believe in the state educating its employees. In the past I have always had a good relationship with OFM.

Simplify.

Simplify some of their work sheets. Being more open minded when it is related to vacancy and occupancy rates.

Make available forms for number/names of people in household without having to take a complete census.

Automated forms. For example, online forms such as a statewide travel voucher. I know they are working on it. It is the main one.

A simplified form.

Sometimes their forms are not adaptable. Problems with computers locking up because of imbedded Excel worksheet in Word document.

Simplify the budget system - it is too costly, and is wasted effort and paper. It does not really support the decisions the Legislature needs to make. Each year it gets more complicated and the performance measures are just laughable. The performance indicators are based on the private sector, with goals, etc, which drives your budget, but it is politics that is changed when a new director arrives. We keep doing it because we have always done it that way. Part of the process is to develop your mission and plan.

FASTRACK specific mentions

Real time budget tracking. I think that is what FASTRACK may be used for.

They can continue to work on the ability to understand the FASTRACK so you can track budget more easily.

FASTRACK needs to be expanded both on the revenue side and on the expenditures side.

The ability to download information in a meaningful manner from FASTRACK. To produce more meaningful management reports.

Other Executive Level Questions

Q23 (cont.) If OFM could make ONE change that would make their products and services better, what would it be?

Allotment system-specific mentions

If there was some way they could combine the components needed for the 1099 with the FASTRACK so we could eventually get rid of DRS.

Develop their budget and allotment systems in a Window-based server base.

Give more information in their expenditure reports. A wider variety of reports at the funding level. FASTRACK-type database that operates quicker than FASTRACK does.

Better access to FASTRACK.

Bring the information that we can get out of FASTRACK and AFRS more detailed information so that we can pinpoint the date we need.

Provide a report that would give us all the revenue allotments by month.

Update their allotment system.

Continue getting all the systems that are still out there consolidated into one as far as budget and allotment reporting.

They need to develop a Windows based allotment preparation system.

The allotment system is 15 years old. They need to modernize it. You have to enter one number at a time. Can't use it with a spreadsheet. They're trying to take the FASTRACK and put it in place of all their other reports so I'm still waiting for that.

A new allotment system. Right now you can't tell in terms of how the information looks when going into the machine until the next day when it comes out, it's slow.

Improve the allotment process, especially the capital projects.

Simplify the allotment process. Whenever we get our appropriation from the Legislature, we have to do it manually and put it into our systems. There should be a way that we could do it automatically.

They need to do with allotment what they did with budgets, improve the allotment system. Same as to the budget like BDS, the same reconstruction of allotments.

Let us do allotment changes as needed instead of only once a year.

Reduce the amount of useless information that they require agencies to report. Fewer details for allotments and less detail in budget submittals.

Other Executive Level Questions

Other

Make the budget process simpler. Maybe fewer forms.

To do the contracts for us at no charge!

Q23 (cont.) If OFM could make ONE change that would make their products and services better, what would it be?

Make them cheaper.

If OFM, general administration, and the information systems division could have the same cut-off points for contracts, it would be helpful (dollar amounts). Also, to work on the definitions, I understand that this is difficult but it would help. If something could be done to reduce the number of levels, it would improve communications. I used to work for a large corporation with a flat structure and communications were quicker and decisions were made faster. We get caught up in the process rather what are we trying to do, and it helps to look at what we want to do.

Stability. Maintaining or trying at least to eliminate the high turnover of staff.

To make AFRS more user-friendly. Provide more help screens.

Greater accessibility to individuals at OFM.

Relate capital plans to facilities operation and maintenance. There needs to be a more defined link between capital plans and operations and maintenance.

Continue accessibility. Focus specifically on operating and capital access.

"Gimme mo money!"

Need one system.

Perhaps contact the elected officials directly with regards to what is going on local-wise as well as statewide.

Simpler is better. Less accounting, more management would be useful. I know that's their function, making more fiscal information available to managers in a more easily translatable format.

Small agency client services - these changes have been made.

Review of information that they need and see if it is still useful, necessary, and used in decision making. They say that they don't make decisions. If they don't make decisions, why ask for certain items. Glad some things are improving.

Improve the fiscal note process. The standards need to be better understood as far as what OFM wants in those documents.

Other Executive Level Questions

Stability of budget analysts.

AFRS reports earlier in the fiscal year, at the start of the fiscal year.

They could deal with policy above politics. How's that?

More clear and precise position taking. A lot of times the answers received may vary by the individual that you're talking to or it seems OFM may not want to take sides so they just tell you something and let you make your own decision.

Q23 (cont.) If OFM could make ONE change that would make their products and services better, what would it be?

To not reduce our population projections.

Just reduce costs. Anything, or item, product or service?

Let the agency have more control of their own budgets and have OFM quit micromanaging.

Flexibility. Allowing for options instead of one answer they're very rigid.

Keep the politics out of it. For the most part, accounting rules are cut and dry, but what happens, some of the rules will not be followed because someone won't get off the dime or won't let the buck stop there.

Get rid of redundancies. We have quarterly variance reports that we do and they ask for it from several divisions. That is just one example.

Make their products more consistent, system products in general. I use several but not all of them are the same and sometime it's hard to remember which system you're in.

Address the appeals process around the budget development.

To acknowledge the encumbrances of the agencies.

Make it so that we can get hold of <name> easier. Put a pager on the man.

I believe in continuous quality improvement. In the budget process I wish there was a way for the agency to have more input into the budget discussion. We don't know the results until the budget comes out. We need to be involved in the discussions, the logic of decisions, and to understand what goes on.

Going back and reducing the data they collect that does not appear to be used in policy making.

Streamlining the capital budget process.

I would like to see the OFM budget to make the agency's budget request as it has been approved in the Governor's budget. Make it a higher priority for lobbying the adoption of the Governor's

Other Executive Level Questions

budget. In this, small agencies get lost. The big agencies are getting all the attention.

Keep the costs down for small agencies especially. A lot of the new Internet-based systems that they are developing are great. Some are not applicable to a smaller agency and it does cost us more and I would just like them to stay cognizant of that.

To simplify their financial and budgeting systems.

Get rid of TAPS, or replace it with something I don't dread facing.

An extra layer of detail out of AFRS, to the project level.

Earlier distribution of budget instructions.

They could change all aspects of OFM developing understanding of agency's realities and perspectives. Q23 (cont.) If OFM could make ONE change that would make their products and services better, what would it be?

What it means to me are things as in service deliveries as opposed to being understanding and developing in central regulation.

Reduce the cost. We're charged like 17 cents per line item.

I would like to see them actually work closer with the auditor's office as far as the consultants are concerned. That would be a real benefit to us.

Get more input from agencies.

I think they're on the right track in looking for a replacement for AFRS, but that will be a very big task.

Put project code on AFRS.

In spite of the fact that they've created FASTRACK - a new system, they still do not have a decent reporting system for non-accounting managers. Through all my 17 years, OFM cannot generate a report that non-accounting people who have to read accounting information can read. It's difficult. Our agency created a nice report internally with AFRS data. So I guess if I had one single thing I could wish for, that would be it.

Less regulations.

Improve AFRS.

AFRS can be a little confusing. It's not very obvious on how to do things. You have to go through things step by step and if I lose my way it's not very obvious how to get back on track. I'm very familiar with computers and I still have trouble with that.